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To MOTHER

An Anthology of Mother Verse
With an Introduction by
Kate Douglas Wiggin



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TO MOTHER

AN ANTHOLOGY OF MOTHER VERSE



Most of all the other
beautiful things in life
come by twos and threes
by dozens and hundreds
Plenty of roses, stars
sunsets, rainbows
brothers and sisters
aunts and cousins
but only one Mother
in all the wide world

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

TO MOTHER

An Anthology of Mother Verse

With an Introduction by
KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN



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To My Mother



God gives us friends, and that means much;
But far above all others,
The greatest of his gifts to earth
Was when He thought of Mothers



HYMN FOR THE MOTHER

*My child is lying on my knees;
The signs of heaven she reads;
My face is all the heaven she sees,
Is all the heaven she needs.*

*And she is well, yea, bathed in bliss,
If heaven is in my face, —
Behind it is all tenderness
And truthfulness and grace.*

*I mean her well so earnestly,
Unchanged in changing mood;
My life would go without a sigh
To bring her something good.*

*I also am a child, and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze upon the starry sky,
And then I must not speak;*

*For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
The Infinite of God.*

*Ay, true to her, though troubled sore,
I cannot choose but be:
Thou who art peace forevermore
Art very true to me.*

Hymn for the Mother

*If I am low and sinful, bring
More love where need is rife;
Thou knowest what an awful thing
It is to be a life.*

*Hast thou not wisdom to enwrap
My waywardness about,
In doubting safety on the lap
Of Love that knows no doubt ?*

*Lo ! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,
My child upon my knee;
She looketh up into my face,
And I look up to thee.*

GEORGE MACDONALD

FOREWORD

SCATTERED throughout the works of the great poets, there are many beautiful tributes to mothers and subtle interpretations of motherhood; also, in old as well as in very new poems, there are illuminating suggestions to mothers regarding both their opportunities and their responsibilities. This valuable body of "mother literature" has but one drawback — the fact that it is so diffused. The aim of this book has been to gather together in one volume the very best poems from these various sources, for the use and also for the enjoyment of present-day mothers, both young and old.

E. McC.

CAMBRIDGE, *April*, 1917.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. BY KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN xvii

THE YOUNG MOTHER

Seven Times Four	<i>Jean Ingelow</i>	3
A Mother's Picture		
	<i>Edmund Clarence Stedman</i>	4
Mother's Love	<i>Thomas Burbidge</i>	5
The Widow's Mite	<i>Frederick Locker-Lampson</i>	7
The Daguerreotype	<i>William Vaughn Moody</i>	7
Baby's Skies	<i>M. C. Bartlett</i>	16
The Mother's Return	<i>Dorothy Wordsworth</i>	16
Song from "The Princess"		
("Home they brought her warrior dead")		
	<i>Alfred Tennyson</i>	18
Alison's Mother to the Brook		
	<i>Josephine Preston Peabody</i>	19
Children's Kisses	<i>Josephine Preston Peabody</i>	22
Maternal Grief	<i>William Wordsworth</i>	24
Songs for My Mother		
	<i>Anna Hempstead Branch</i>	28

MOTHERS OF MEN

Mother and Poet .	<i>Elizabeth Barrett Browning</i>	33
Mother Wept	<i>Joseph Skipsey</i>	39
How's My Boy?	<i>Sidney Dobell</i>	40
The Sad Mother .	<i>Katharine Tynan Hinkson</i>	42
An Aboriginal Mother's Lament		
	<i>Charles Harpur</i>	43
Lines to My Mother's Picture		
	<i>William Cowper</i>	44
My Mother's Bible .	<i>George Pope Morris</i>	50
Two Sons	<i>Robert Buchanan</i>	51
Mother to Son .	<i>Irene Rutherford McLeod</i>	52

Contents

One Mother . . .	<i>Irene Rutherford McLeod</i>	54
An English Mother	<i>Robert Underwood Johnson</i>	59
Matres Dolorosæ	<i>Robert Bridges</i>	61
The Absent Soldier Son . . .	<i>Sidney Dobell</i>	62
Mother and Son	<i>Phæbe Cary</i>	63
Motherhood	<i>Agnes Lee</i>	65

CHRISTMAS MOTHER POEMS

Hymn on the Nativity . . .	<i>John Milton</i>	69
A Mother in Egypt .	<i>Marjorie L. C. Pickthall</i>	79
Christmas Carol	<i>Unknown</i>	82
Regina Cœli	<i>Coventry Patmore</i>	83
Christ the Mendicant .	<i>John Banister Tabb</i>	84
A Christmas Carol . .	<i>Josiah Gilbert Holland</i>	85
A Little Child's Hymn	<i>Francis Turner Palgrave</i>	86
A Carol	<i>Unknown</i>	87

LULLABIES

Sea Slumber-Song	<i>Roden Noel</i>	91
Sweet and Low	<i>Alfred Tennyson</i>	92
A Cradle Hymn	<i>Isaac Watts</i>	92
Cradle Song	<i>Thomas Bailey Aldrich</i>	95
Sleep, Baby, Sleep	<i>Anonymous</i>	95
Japanese Lullaby	<i>Eugene Field</i>	96
The Cottager's Lullaby	<i>Dorothy Wordsworth</i>	97
Swedish Mother's Lullaby	<i>Frederika Bremer</i>	98
The Road to Slumber-Land	<i>Mary Dow Brine</i>	98
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod .	<i>Eugene Field</i>	100
Auld Daddy Darkness . .	<i>James Ferguson</i>	102
Mother-Song (from "Prince Lucifer")	<i>Alfred Austin</i>	103
Sephestia's Lullaby (from "Menaphon")	<i>Robert Greene</i>	104
Cradle Song	<i>William Blake</i>	105
Lullaby of an Infant Chief .	<i>Walter Scott</i>	106

THE JOY OF MOTHERHOOD

The Firstborn	<i>John Arthur Goodchild</i>	111
Baby-Land	<i>George Cooper</i>	112

Contents

Mother's Song	<i>Unknown</i>	113
Cradle Song	<i>Unknown</i>	115
Cradle Song (from "Bitter-Sweet")		
	<i>Josiah Gilbert Holland</i>	116
A Song of Twilight	<i>Unknown</i>	118
Tucking the Baby In	<i>Curtis May</i>	119
Mother and Child	<i>William Gilmore Simms</i>	121
Maternity	<i>Anne P. L. Field</i>	122
The Little Black Boy	<i>William Blake</i>	123
My Bird	<i>Emily C. Judson</i>	124
Children	<i>Walter Savage Landor</i>	125
My Little Dear	<i>Dollie Radford</i>	126
The Immortality of Love	<i>Robert Southey</i>	127
"That They All May Be One"	<i>Roden Noel</i>	128

OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER POEMS

My Mother	<i>Jane Taylor</i>	133
Half-Waking	<i>William Allingham</i>	135
To a Child Embracing His Mother		
	<i>Thomas Hood</i>	136
Wishing	<i>William Allingham</i>	137
The Visit	<i>From Rhymes for the Nursery</i>	138
The Baby	<i>Jane and Ann Taylor</i>	141
Getting Up	<i>Jane Taylor</i>	142
Mamma (from "The Floweret")		
	<i>Anna M. Wells</i>	143
To My Mother	<i>Thomas Moore</i>	145
Cuddle Doon	<i>Alexander Anderson</i>	145
The Baby	<i>Jane Taylor</i>	147
Good-Night	<i>Jane Taylor</i>	149
The Old Arm-Chair	<i>Eliza Cook</i>	150

SONNETS ON MOTHERHOOD

Ad Matrem	<i>Julian Henry Fane</i>	155
Nature	<i>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow</i>	155
Bedtime	<i>Francis, Earl of Rosslyn</i>	156
Her Firstborn	<i>Charles Tennyson Turner</i>	157
To A Young Child	<i>Eliza Scudder</i>	158

Contents

The Virgin	<i>William Wordsworth</i>	158
Thanksgiving After Childbirth	<i>William Wordsworth</i>	159
My Mother	<i>William Bell Scott</i>	160
Evening	<i>Wendell Phillips Garrison</i>	161
To My First Love, My Mother	<i>Christina G. Rossetti</i>	161

TRIBUTES TO MOTHERS

Mother o' Mine	<i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	165
At Bethlehem	<i>John Banister Tabb</i>	165
To His Mother	<i>John Banister Tabb</i>	166
The Shepherdess	<i>Alice Meynell</i>	166
Motherless	<i>Elizabeth Barrett Browning</i>	167
Child and Mother	<i>Eugene Field</i>	169
My Ain Wife	<i>Alexander Laing</i>	170
She Was a Phantom of Delight	<i>William Wordsworth</i>	171
Cling to Thy Mother	<i>George Bethune</i>	172
Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep	<i>Eugene Henry Pullen</i>	174
Birth <i>Annie R. Stillman</i> ("Grace Raymond")		175
Only One	<i>George Cooper</i>	176
"The Old Face of the Mother of Many Children"	<i>Walt Whitman</i>	177
A Mother	<i>Caroline E. S. Norton</i>	178
To My Mother	<i>Robert Haven Schauffler</i>	180
My Mother	<i>Frederic Hentz Adams</i>	181

INDEX OF FIRST LINES	185
INDEX OF TITLES	189
INDEX OF AUTHORS	193



INTRODUCTION

THERE was once a Child who lived very much by himself in a tall building with many windows looking skyward.

He did not lack for care, for he had food and drink, shelter and raiment, yet he was always hungry and thirsty and cold, and the young soul of him pined and knew not why.

The days were very dreary and very long, though in a child's life they should flit by like painted butterflies on the wing.

There was a courtyard far, far below, so that out-of-doors was not withheld from the Child, but when he reached the place from which the green wood could be seen, the blue sky was so far away that he felt desolate, and longed for a smaller world of which he could be a part.

And so it was, day after day, till twilight came and hid the bigness of things; and when the cool dark floated into his bedroom

Introduction

and the friendly moon came to keep him company, he was happy, for then he drifted off into the land of dreams.

The dream led him first into a garden; open to the sun and offering to every sense a rare and subtle charm that could be felt, but not defined.

There was a Balm-of-Gilead tree in one corner, and in another a group of young pines, — slender, strong, vigorous trees under which one could hide in the noonday heat. And there were tufts of sweet herbs sending out health-giving odors; and there were perfumed tangles of mignonette and heliotrope and lavender and purple clover, with honeysuckle climbing here and there to make the air fragrant.

The flowers were all dear, familiar, modest ones, such as violets and pansies, clove-pinks and hyacinths; but, loveliest of all, was a clump of Madonna lilies, their tall green stalks crowned with dazzling white blossoms. The Child crept under them and, looking up, marveled at the shining purity of the blooms that made a little white heaven over his head.

There were birds in the trees, and the Child sometimes fancied that they tried to speak to him, although he could never puzzle out the meaning of their language. But one night when the birds slept he heard the

Introduction

rustle of great wings, a stirring of the air, a soft flutter, and then, in the darkness, a Voice. There was no Presence, but the Voice was clear, and it said:—

“Do you find the garden beautiful, my child?”

“The most beautiful thing in the world,” answered the Child. “Is it you who are making it?”

“Yes,” said the Voice, “I am making the garden, with your help.”

“But I have done nothing,” said the Child.

“You have loved it,” said the Voice, “and Love makes things grow.”

“And shall I ever plant anything in the garden myself?” asked the Child.

“Yes; for the garden is now finished save for that which you will plant with your own hands.”

And then the Child awoke with the perfume of lilies in his nostrils, and it was the beginning of another long day.

But night came with a difference. The Child had barely slipped into the dream when he felt that he was being swiftly wafted to the garden. And the wings that bore him and guided him were so soft and so strong that he did not wonder when he heard the Voice.

Introduction

And the Voice said: —

“If you were to plant something precious in the garden, my child, what spot would you choose?”

“I would choose the spot under the Madonna lilies,” said the Child, “for the blossoms make a little white heaven overhead and near by is a crystal spring whose pebbles are changed into gold and precious stones by the moonbeams.”

Like puffs of thistledown they swept over the young pines and floated past the little groves of mignonette and lavender and purple clover, till they alighted near the crystal spring where the Madonna lilies bloomed.

“Stretch out your hand, my child,” said the Voice, “and what you find in the wet grass, that is for you to plant.”

And the Child stretched out his hand and touched something soft and warm hidden in a blanket of leaves.

“Is it a bird?” he whispered, for he felt a throb under his hand.

“*No, it is not a bird!*” said the Voice, — “*it is a heart!* Make a hollow for it like a nest; do not unwrap it, but lay it gently in the hollow; cover it lightly with soft earth, then step back, for the place on which you stand will be holy ground.”

Introduction

And the Child did as he was bidden.

He made a hollow like a nest; he laid the heart gently in the hollow without removing its blanket of leaves; then he covered it lightly with earth and stepped back and waited in silence.

And straightway (for there is no time in dreams) the heart stirred, and trembled, and swelled, and broke through the soft earth, and lifted itself and grew. And it seemed to summon to its aid all the richest treasures of the garden; the strength of the young pines, the aroma of the sweet herbs, the fragrance of the flowers, the healing balsam that flowed from the Balm-of-Gilead tree, and the purity of the lilies.

And when it came to its moment of full perfection, *lo! it was, not a growing and blossoming heart, but — a Mother!*

And the Child knew! For knowledge comes swiftly and surely in dreams!

He stretched out his arms, and in the deep peace that followed mutual recognition and need, the Wingèd Presence vanished softly into the darkness, leaving the Mother and Child together in the Garden of Dreams.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

The YOUNG MOTHER



SEVEN TIMES FOUR

HEIGH HO ! daisies and buttercups,
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall,
When the wind wakes how they rock in the
grasses,
And dance with the cuckoo-buds, slender
and small :
Here's two bonny boys, and here's mother's
own lasses,
Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Mother shall thread them a daisy chain ;
Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-spar-
row,
That loved her brown little ones, loved
them full fain ;
Sing, " Heart thou art wide though the house
be but narrow " —
Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and
they bow ;
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,
And haply one musing doth stand at her
prow.

To Mother

O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little
daughters,
Maybe he thinks on you now!

Heigh ho! daisies and buttercups,
Fair yellow daffodils stately and tall;
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow
and thrall,
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing
its measure —
God that is over us all.

Jean Ingelow

A MOTHER'S PICTURE

SHE seemed an angel to our infant eyes!
Once, when the glorifying moon revealed
Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled —
Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy
skies
Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise —
We looked to see the pinions half-concealed.
The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield
Her back to me, who loved her in this
wise,
And since have little known her, but have
grown
To see another mother, tenderly,
Watch over sleeping darlings of her own;

The Young Mother

Perchance the years have changed her : yet
alone

This picture lingers : still she seems to me
The fair, young Angel of my infancy.

Edmund Clarence Stedman

MOTHER'S LOVE

HE sang so wildly, did the Boy,
That you could never tell
If 't was a madman's voice you heard,
Or if the spirit of a bird
Within his heart did dwell :
A bird that dallies with his voice
Among the matted branches ;
Or on the free blue air his note
To pierce, and fall, and rise, and float,
With bolder utterance launches,
None ever was so sweet as he,
The boy that wildly sang to me ;
Though toilsome was the way and long,
He led me not to lose the song.

But when again we stood below
The unhidden sky, his feet
Grew slacker, and his note more slow,
But more than doubly sweet.
He led me then a little way
Athwart the barren moor,
And then he stayed and bade me stay

To Mother

Beside a cottage door ;
I could have stayed of mine own will,
In truth, my eye and heart to fill
With the sweet sight which I saw there,
At the dwelling of the cottager.

A little in the doorway sitting,
The mother plied her busy knitting,
And her cheek so softly smiled,
You might be sure, although her gaze
Was on the meshes of the lace,
Yet her thoughts were with her child.
But when the boy had heard her voice,
As o'er her work she did rejoice,
His became silent altogether,
And slily creeping by the wall
He seiz'd a single plume, let fall
By some wild bird of longest feather ;
And all a-tremble with his freak,
He touch'd her lightly on the cheek.

Oh, what a loveliness her eyes
Gather in that one moment's space,
While peeping round the post she spies
Her darling's laughing face !
Oh, mother's love is glorifying,
On the cheek like sunset lying ;
In the eyes a moisten'd light,
Softer than the moon at night !

Thomas Burbidge

The Young Mother

THE WIDOW'S MITE

A WIDOW, — she had only one !
A puny and decrepit son ;
But, day and night,
Though fretful oft, and weak and small,
A loving child, he was her all, —
The Widow's Mite.

The Widow's Mite — aye, so sustain'd,
She battled onward, nor complain'd
Though friends were fewer :
And while she toil'd for daily fare,
A little crutch upon the stair
Was music to her.

I saw her then, and now I see
That, though resign'd and cheerful, she
Has sorrow'd much :
She has, — He gave it tenderly, —
Much faith, and, carefully laid by,
A little crutch.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

THE DAGUERREOTYPE

THIS, then, is she,
My mother as she looked at seventeen,
When she first met my father. Young in-
credibly,

To Mother

Younger than spring, without the faintest
trace

Of disappointment, weariness, or tear
Upon the childlike earnestness and grace
Of the waiting face.

Those close-wound ropes of pearl
(Or common beads made precious by their
use)

Seem heavy for so slight a throat to wear ;
But the low bodice leaves the shoulders bare
And half the glad swell of the breast, for news
That now the woman stirs within the girl.

And yet,
Even so, the loops and globes
Of beaten gold

And jet

Hung, in the stately way of old,
From the ears' drooping lobes

On festivals and Lord's-day of the week,
Show all too matron-sober for the cheek, —
Which, now I look again, is perfect child,
Or no — or no — 't is girlhood's very self,
Moulded by some deep, mischief-ridden elf
So meek, so maiden mild,

But startling the close gazer with the sense
Of passion forest-shy and forest-wild,
And delicate delirious merriments.

As a moth beats sidewise
And up and over, and tries

The Young Mother

To skirt the irresistible lure
Of the flame that has him sure,
My spirit, that is none too strong to-day,
Flutters and makes delay, —
Pausing to wonder at the perfect lips,
Lifting to muse upon the low-drawn hair
And each hid radiance there,
But powerless to stem the tide-race bright,
The vehement peace which drifts it toward
the light

Where soon — ah, now, with cries
Of grief and giving-up unto its gain
It shrinks no longer nor denies,
But dips
Hurriedly home to the exquisite heart of
pain, —

And all is well, for I have seen them plain,
The unforgettable, the unforgotten eyes!
Across the blinding gush of these good tears
They shine as in the sweet and heavy years
When by her bed and chair

We children gathered jealously to share
The sunlit aura breathing myrrh and thyme,
Where the sore-stricken body made a clime
Gentler than May and pleasanter than rhyme,
Holier and more mystical than prayer.

God, how thy ways are strange!

That this should be, even this,

The patient head

Which suffered years ago the dreary change!

To Mother

That these so dewy lips should be the same.
As those I stooped to kiss
And heard my harrowing half-spoken name,
A little ere the one who bowed above her,
Our father and her very constant lover,
Rose stoical, and we knew that she was dead.
Then I, who could not understand or share
His antique nobleness,
Being unapt to bear
The insults which time flings us for our
proof,
Fled from the horrible roof
Into the alien sunshine merciless,
The shrill satiric fields ghastly with day
Raging to front God in his pride of sway
And hurl across the lifted swords of fate
That ringed Him where He sat
My puny gage of scorn and desolate hate
Which somehow should undo Him, after
all!
That this girl face, expectant, virginal,
Which gazes out at me
Boon as a sweetheart, as if nothing loth
(Save for the eyes, with other presage
stored)
To pledge me troth,
And in the kingdom where the heart is lord
Take sail on the terrible gladness of the
deep
Whose winds the gray Norns keep,—

The Young Mother

That this should be indeed
The flesh which caught my soul, a flying
seed,
Out of the to and fro
Of scattering hands where the seedsman
Mage,
Stooping from star to star and age to age
Sings as he sows!
That underneath this breast
Nine moons I fed
Deep of divine unrest,
While over and over in the dark she said,
“Blessed! but not as happier children
blessed” —

That this should be
Even she . . .
God, how with time and change
Thou makest thy footsteps strange!
Ah, now I know
They play upon me, and it is not so
Why, 't is a girl I never saw before,
A little thing to flatter and make weep,
To tease until her heart is sore,
Then kiss and clear the score;
A gypsy run-the-fields,
A little liberal daughter of the earth,
Good for what hour of truancy and mirth
The careless season yields
Hither-side the flood of the year and yonder
of the neap;

To Mother

Then thank you, thanks again, and twenty
light good-byes, —

O shrined above the skies,

Frown not, clear brow,

Darken not, holy eyes!

Thou knowest well I know that it is thou

Only to save from such memories

As would unman me quite,

Here in this web of strangeness caught

And prey to troubled thought

Do I devise

These foolish shifts and slight ;

Only to shield me from the afflicting sense

Of some waste influence

Which from this morning face and lustrous
hair

Breathes on me sudden ruin and despair.

In any other guise,

With any but this girlish depth of gaze,

Your coming had not so unsealed and
poured

The dusty amphoras where I had stored

The drippings of the winepress of my days.

I think these eyes foresee,

Now in their unawakened virgin time,

Their mother's pride in me,

And dream even now, unconsciously,

Upon each soaring peak and sky-hung lea

You pictured I should climb.

Broken premonitions come,

The Young Mother

Shapes, gestures visionary,
Not as once to maiden Mary
The manifest angel with fresh lilies came
Intelligibly calling her by name;
But vanishingly, dumb,
Thwarted and bright and wild,
As heralding a sin-defiled,
Earth-encumbered, blood-begotten, passion-
ate man-child,
Who yet should be a trump of mighty call
Blown in the gates of evil kings
To make them fall;
Who yet should be a sword of flame before
The soul's inviolate door
To beat away the clang of hellish wings;
Who yet should be a lyre
Of high unquenchable desire
In the day of little things, —
Look where the amphoras,
The yield of many days,
Trod by my hot soul from the pulp of
self,
And set upon the shelf
In sullen pride
The Vineyard-master's tasting to abide —
O mother mine!
Are these the bringings-in, the doings fine
Of him who used to praise?
Emptied and overthrown
The jars lie strown.

To Mother

These, for their flavor duly nursed,
Drip from the stopples vinegar accursed ;
These, I thought honied to the very seal,
Dry, dry, — a little acid meal,
A pinch of mouldy dust,
Sole leavings of the amber-mantling must ;
These rude to look upon,
But flasking up the liquor dearest won,
Through sacred hours and hard,
With watchings and with wrestlings and
 with grief,
Even of these, of these in chief,
The stale breath sickens reeking from the
 shard.
Nothing is left. Aye, how much less than
 naught !
What shall be said or thought
Of the slack hours and waste imaginings,
The cynic rending of the wings,
Known to the froward, that unreckoning
 heart
Whereof this brewage was the precious part,
Treasured and set away with furtive boast ?
O dear and cruel ghost,
Be merciful, be just !
See, I was yours and I am in the dust.
Then look not so, as if all things were well !
Take your eyes from me, leave me to my
 shame,
Or else, if gaze they must,

The Young Mother

Steel them with judgment, darken them with
blame ;

But by the ways of light ineffable
You bade me go and I have faltered from,
By the low waters moaning out of hell
Whereto my feet have come,
Lay not on me these intolerable
Looks of rejoicing love, of pride, of happy
trust !

Nothing dismayed ?

By all I say and all I hint not made
Afraid ?

O then, stay by me ! Let
These eyes afflict me, cleanse me, keep me
yet,

Brave eyes and true !

See how the shriveled heart, that long has
lain

Dead to delight and pain,

Stirs, and begins again

To utter pleasant life, as if it knew

The wintry days were through ;

As if in its awakening boughs it heard

The quick, sweet-spoken bird.

Strong eyes and brave,

Inexorable to save !

William Vaughn Moody

To Mother

BABY'S SKIES

WOULD you know the baby's skies ?
Baby's skies are mother's eyes.
Mother's eyes and smile together
Make the baby's pleasant weather.

Mother, keep your eyes from tears,
Keep your heart from foolish fears.
Keep your lips from dull complaining
Lest the baby think 't is raining.

M. C. Bartlett

THE MOTHER'S RETURN

A MONTH, sweet little ones, is past
Since your dear mother went away, —
And she to-morrow will return ;
To-morrow is the happy day.

O blessed tidings ! thought of joy !
The eldest heard with steady glee :
Silent he stood ; then laughed amain, —
And shouted, " Mother, come to me ! "

Louder and louder did he shout,
With witless hope to bring her near ;
" Nay, patience ! patience, little boy !
Your tender mother cannot hear."

The Young Mother

I told of hills, and far-off towns,
And long, long vales to travel through ;
He listens, puzzled, sore perplexed,
But he submits ; what can he do ?

No strife disturbs his sister's breast ;
She wars not with the Mystery
Of time and distance, night and day ;
The bonds of our humanity,

Her joy is like an instinct, joy
Of kitten, bird, or summer fly ;
She dances, runs without an aim,
She chatters in her ecstasy.

Her brother now takes up the note,
And answers back his sister's glee :
They hug the infant in my arms,
As if to force his sympathy.

Then, settling into fond discourse,
We rested in the garden bower ;
While sweetly shone the evening sun
In his departing hour.

We told o'er all that we had done, —
Our rambles by the swift brook's side
Far as the willow-skirted pool,
Where two fair swans together glide.

To Mother

We talked of change, of winter gone,
Of green leaves on the hawthorn spray,
Of birds that build their nests and sing,
And all "since mother went away!"

To her these tales they will repeat,
To her our new-born tribes will show,
The goslings green, the ass's colt,
The lambs that in the meadow go.

But see, the evening star comes forth!
To bed the children must depart;
A moment's heaviness they feel,
A sadness at the heart:

'T is gone — and in a merry fit
They run up stairs in gamesome race;
I, too, infected by their mood,
I could have joined the wanton chase.

Five minutes past — and, O the change!
Asleep upon their beds they lie;
Their busy limbs in perfect rest,
And closed the sparkling eye.

Dorothy Wordsworth

SONG FROM "THE PRINCESS"

HOME they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry.
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

The Young Mother

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe ;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face ;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee —
Like summer tempest came her tears —
“ Sweet my child, I live for thee.”
Alfred Tennyson

ALISON'S MOTHER TO THE BROOK

BROOK, of the listening grass,
Brook of the sun-fleckt wings,
Brook of the same wild way and flicker-
ing spell !
Must you begone? Will you forever
pass,
After so many years and dear to tell? —
Brook of all hoverings . .
Brook that I kneel above ;
Brook of my love.

To Mother

Ah, but I have a charm to trouble you ;
A spell that shall subdue
Your all-escaping-heart, unheedful one
And unremembering !
Now, when I make my prayer
To your wild brightness there
That will but run and run,
O mindless Water ! —
Hark, — now will I bring
A grace as wild, — my little yearling daughter,
My Alison.

Heed well that threat ;
And tremble for your hill-born liberty
So bright to see ! —
Your shadow-dappled way, unthwarted yet,
And the high hills whence all your dearness
bubbled ; —
You, never to possess !
For let her dip but once — O fair and fleet, —
Here in your shallows, yes,
Here in your silverness
Her two blithe feet, —
O Brook of mine, how shall your heart be
troubled !

The heart, the bright unmothering heart of
you,
That never knew, —

The Young Mother

(O never, more than mine of long ago.
How could we know? —)
For who should guess
The shock and smiting of that perfect-
ness? —
The lily-thrust of those ecstatic feet
Unpityingly sweet? —
Sweet beyond all the blurred blind dreams
that grope
The upward paths of hope?
And who could guess
The dulcet holiness,
The lilt and gladness of those jocund feet,
Unpityingly sweet?
Ah, for your coolness that shall change and
stir
With every glee of her! —
Under the fresh amaze
That drips and glistens from her wiles and
ways;
When the endearing air
That everywhere
Must twine and fold and follow her, shall be
Rippled to ring on ring of melody, —
Music, like shadows from the joy of her,
Small starry Reveller! —
When from her triumphings, —
All frolic wings —
There soars beyond the glories of the height,
The laugh of her delight.

To Mother

And it shall sound, until
Your heart stand still;
Shaken to human sight;
Struck through with tears and light;
One with the one desire
Unto that central Fire
Of Love the Sun, whence all we lighted are
Even from clod to star.

And all your glory, O most swift and
sweet! —

And all your exultation only this;
To be the lowly and forgotten kiss
Beneath those feet.

You that must ever pass, —
You of the same wild way, —
The silver-bright good-bye without a look! —
You that would never stay,
For the beseeching grass . . .
Brook! —

Josephine Preston Peabody

CHILDREN'S KISSES

So; it is nightfall then.
The valley flush
That beckoned home the way for herds
and men,
Is hardly spent.

The Young Mother

Down the bright pathway winds, through
 veils of hush

And wonderment.

Unuttered yet, the chime

That tells of folding-time;

Hardly the sun has set.

The trees are sweetly troubled with bright
 words

From new-alighted birds;—

And yet, . . .

Here,— round my neck, are come to cling
 and twine,

The arms, the folding arms, close, close and
 fain,

All mine!—

I pleaded to, in vain,

I reached for, only to their dimpled scorning,

Down the blue halls of Morning;

Where all things else could lure them on
 and on,

Now here, now gone,—

From bush to bush, from beckoning bough
 to bough,

With bird-calls of *Come Hither!*—

. . . Ah, but now,

Now it is dusk. — And from his heaven of
 mirth,

A wilding skylark, sudden dropt to earth

Along the last low sunbeam yellow moted,

To Mother

Athrob with joy, —
There pushes here, a little golden Boy,
Still-gazing with great eyes.
And wonder-wise,
All fragranciness, all valor silver-throated,
My daughterling, my swan,
My Alison !

Closer than homing lambs against the bars
At folding-time, that crowd, all mother-
warm,
They crowd, — they cling, they wreath;
And thick as sparkles of the thronging stars,
Their kisses swarm.

O Rose of being, at whose heart I breathe,
Fold over; hold me fast
In the dark Eden of a blinding kiss.
And lightning heart's-desire, be still at last!
Heart can no more, —
Life can no more,
Than this.

Josephine Preston Peabody

MATERNAL GRIEF

DEPARTED CHILD ! I could forget thee once
Though at my bosom nursed; this woeful
gain
Thy dissolution brings, that in my soul

The Young Mother

Is present and perpetually abides
A shadow, never, never to be displaced
By the returning substance, seen or touched,
Seen by mine eyes, or clasped in my embrace.
Absence and death how differ they ! and how
Shall I admit that nothing can restore
What one short sigh so easily removed ? —
Death, life, and sleep, reality and thought,
Assist me, God, their boundaries to know,
O teach me calm submission to thy Will !
The Child she mourned had overstepped the
pale

Of Infancy, but still did breathe the air
That sanctifies its confines, and partook
Reflected beams of that celestial light
To all the Little-ones on sinful earth
Not unvouchsafed — a light that warmed
and cheered

Those several qualities of heart and mind
Which, in her own blest nature, rooted deep,
Daily before the Mother's watchful eye,
And not hers only, their peculiar charms
Unfolded, — beauty, for its present self,
And for its promises to future years,
With not unfrequent rapture fondly hailed.
Have you espied upon a dewy lawn
A pair of Leverets each provoking each
To a continuance of their fearless sport,
Two separate Creatures in their several gifts
Abounding, but so fashioned that, in all

To Mother

That Nature prompts them to display, their
looks,

Their starts of motion and their fits of rest,
An undistinguishable style appears
And character of gladness, as if Spring
Lodged in their innocent bosoms, and the
spirit

Of rejoicing morning were their own?
Such union, in the lovely Girl maintained
And her twin Brother, had the parent seen,
Ere, pouncing like a ravenous bird of prey,
Death in a moment parted them, and left
The Mother, in her turns of anguish, worse
Than desolate; for oft-times from the sound
Of the survivor's sweetest voice (dear child,
He knew it not) and from his happiest
looks,

Did she extract the food of self-reproach,
As one that lived ungrateful for the stay
By Heaven afforded to uphold her maimed
And tottering spirit. And full oft the Boy,
Now first acquainted with distress and grief,
Shrunk from his Mother's presence, shunned
with fear

Her sad approach, and stole away to find,
In his known haunts of joy where'er he
might,

A more congenial object. But, as time
Softened her pangs and reconciled the child
To what he saw, he gradually returned,

The Young Mother

Like a scared Bird encouraged to renew
A broken intercourse ; and, while his eyes
Were yet with pensive fear and gentle awe
Turned upon her who bore him, she would
 stoop

To imprint a kiss that lacked not power to
 spread

Faint color over both their pallid cheeks,
And stilled his tremulous lip. Thus they
 were calmed

And cheered; and now together breathe
 fresh air

In open fields; and when the glare of day
Is gone, and twilight to the Mother's wish
Befriends the observance, readily they join
In walks whose boundary is the lost One's
 grave,

Which he with flowers had planted, finding
 there

Amusement, where the Mother does not
 miss

Dear consolation, kneeling on the turf
In prayer, yet blending with that solemn
 rite

Of pious faith the vanities of grief;
For such, by pitying Angels and by Spirits
Transferred to regions upon which the clouds
Of our weak nature rest not, must be deemed
Those willing tears, and unforbidden sighs,
And all those tokens of a cherished sorrow,

To Mother

Which, soothed and sweetened by the grace
of Heaven

As now it is, seems to her own fond heart,
Immortal as the love that gave it being.

William Wordsworth

SONGS FOR MY MOTHER

I

HER HANDS

MY mother's hands are cool and fair,
They can do anything.
Delicate mercies hide them there
Like flowers in the spring.

When I was small and could not sleep,
She used to come to me,
And with my cheek upon her hand
How sure my rest would be.

For everything she ever touched
Of beautiful or fine,
Their memories living in her hands
Would warm that sleep of mine.

Her hands remember how they played
One time in meadow streams, —
And all the flickering song and shade
Of water took my dreams.

The Young Mother

Swift through her haunted fingers pass
Memories of garden things ;—
I dipped my face in flowers and grass
And sounds of hidden wings.

One time she touched the cloud that kissed
Brown pastures bleak and far ;—
I leaned my cheek into a mist
And thought I was a star.

All this was very long ago
And I am grown ; but yet
The hand that lured my slumber so
I never can forget.

For still when drowsiness comes on
It seems so soft and cool,
Shaped happily beneath my cheek,
Hollow and beautiful.

II

HER WORDS

MY mother has the prettiest tricks
Of words and words and words.
Her talk comes out as smooth and sleek
As breasts of singing birds.

She shapes her speech all silver fine
Because she loves it so.
And her own eyes begin to shine
To hear her stories grow.

To Mother

And if she goes to make a call
Or out to take a walk
We leave our work when she returns
And run to hear her talk.

We had not dreamed these things were so
Of sorrow and of mirth.
Her speech is as a thousand eyes
Through which we see the earth.

God wove a web of loveliness,
Of clouds and stars and birds,
But made not anything at all
So beautiful as words.

They shine around our simple earth
With golden shadowings,
And every common thing they touch
Is exquisite with wings.

There's nothing poor and nothing small
But is made fair with them.
They are the hands of living faith
That touch the garment's hem.

They are as fair as bloom or air,
They shine like any star,
And I am rich who learned from her
How beautiful they are.

Anna Hempstead Branch

MOTHERS *of* MEN



MOTHER AND POET

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the
east,

And one of them shot in the west by the
sea.

Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the
feast

And are wanting a great song for Italy
free,

Let none look at *me*!

Yet I was a poetess only last year,

And good at my art, for a woman men
said;

But *this* woman, *this*, who is agoniz'd here,

—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in
her head

Forever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!

What art *is* she good at, but hurting her
breast

With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile
at the pain?

Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong
as you pressed

And I proud, by that test.

To Mother

What art's for a woman? To hold on
her knees

Both darlings; to feel all their arms
round her throat,

Cling, strangle a little, to sew by de-
grees

And 'broider the long-clothes and neat
little coat;

To dream and to doat. .

To teach them. . . . It stings there! I
made them indeed

Speak plain the word *country*. I taught
them, no doubt,

That a country's a thing men should die
for at need.

I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my
beautiful eyes! . . .

I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the
wheels

Of the guns, and denied not. But then
the surprise

When one sits quite alone! Then one
weeps, then one kneels!

God, how the house feels!

Mothers of Men

At first, happy news came, in gay letters
 moil'd

With my kisses, — of camp-life and glory,
 and how

They both lov'd me ; and, soon coming home
 to be spoil'd,

In return would fan off every fly from my
 brow

With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin : “ Ancona was
 free ! ”

And some one came out of the cheers in
 the street,

With a face pale as stone, to say something
 to me.

My Guido was dead ! I fell down at his
 feet,

While they cheer'd in the street.

I bore it; friends sooth'd me; my grief
 look'd sublime

As the ransom of Italy. One boy re-
 main'd

To be leant on and walk'd with, recalling
 the time

When the first grew immortal, while both
 of them strain'd

To the height he had gain'd.

To Mother

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more
strong,

Writ now, but in one hand, "I was not
to faint, —

One lov'd me for two — would be with me
ere long:

And *Viva l'Italia!* — *he* died for, our
saint,

Who forbids our complaint."

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and
aware

Of a presence that turn'd off the balls, —
was impress'd

It was Guido himself, who knew what I
could bear,

And how 't was impossible, quite dis-
possess'd,

To live on for the rest."

On which without pause, up the telegraph-
line,

Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:
— *Shot.*

Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his," "their"
mother, — not "mine,"

No voice says "*My* mother" again to me.
What!

You think Guido forgot?

Mothers of Men

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with
Heaven,

They drop earth's affections, conceive not
of woe?

I think not. Themselves were too lately for-
given

Through that Love and Sorrow which rec-
oncil'd so

The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'st
through the dark

To the face of Thy Mother! consider I
pray,

How we common mothers stand desolate,
mark,

Whose sons, not being Christs, die with
eyes turn'd away,

And no last word to say!

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature.
We all

Have been patriots, yet each house must
always keep one.

'T were imbecile, hewing out roads to a
wall;

And when Italy's made, for what end is
it done

If we have not a son?

To Mother

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what
then?

When the fair wicked queen sits no more
at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out
of men?

When the guns of Cavilli with final re-
tort
Have cut the game short?

When Venice and Rome keep their own
jubilee,

When your flag takes all heaven for its
white, green, and red,

When *you* have your country from mountain
to sea,

When King Victor has Italy's crown on
his head,

(And I have my Dead) —

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring
your bells low,

And burn your lights faintly! *My* country
is *there*,

Above the star prick'd by the last peak of
snow:

My Italy's *there*, with my brave civic
Pair,

To disfranchise despair!

Mothers of Men

Forgive me. Some women bear children in
strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in
self-scorn;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us
at length
Into wail such as this — and we sit on
forlorn
When the man-child is born.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the
east,
And one of them shot in the west by the
sea,
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast,
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me*.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

MOTHER WEPT

MOTHER wept, and father sigh'd;
With delight a-glow
Cried the lad, "To-morrow," cried,
"To the pit I go."

Up and down the place he sped,
Greeted old and young,
Far and wide the tidings spread,
Clapp'd his hands and sung.

To Mother

Came his cronies, some to gaze
Rapt in wonder ; some
Free with counsel ; some with praise ;
Some with envy dumb.

“ May he,” many a gossip cried,
“ Be from peril kept ” ;
Father hid his face and sighed,
Mother turned and wept.

Joseph Skipsey

HOW 'S MY BOY ?

- “ Ho, Sailor of the sea !
How 's my boy — my boy ? ”
- “ What 's your boy's name, good wife,
And in what good ship sail'd he ? ”
- “ My boy John —
He that went to sea —
What care I for the ship, sailor ?
My boy 's my boy to me.
- “ You come back from sea,
And not know my John ?
I might as well have ask'd some landsman
Yonder down in the town.
There 's not an ass in all the parish
But he knows my John.
- “ How 's my boy — my boy ?
And unless you let me know

Mothers of Men

I'll swear you are no sailor,
Blue jacket or no,
Brass buttons or no, sailor,
Anchor or crown or no!

Sure his ship was the Jolly Briton" —

"Speak low, woman, speak low!"

"And why should I speak low, sailor,
About my own boy John?

If I was loud as I am proud

I'd sing him over the town!

Why should I speak low, sailor?"

"That good ship went down."

"How's my boy — my boy?

What care I for the ship, sailor?

I was never aboard her.

Be she afloat or be she aground,

Sinking or swimming, I'll be bound,

Her owners can afford her!

I say how's my John?"

"Every man on board went down,

Every man aboard her."

"How's my boy — my boy?

What care I for the men, sailor?

I'm not their mother —

How's my boy — my boy?

Tell me of him and no other!

How's my boy — my boy?"

Sidney Dobell

THE SAD MOTHER

O WHEN the half-light weaves
Wild shadows on the floor,
How ghostly come the withered leaves
Stealing about my door!

I sit and hold my breath,
Lone in the lonely house;
Naught breaks the silence still as death,
Only a creeping mouse.

The patter of leaves, it may be,
But liker patter of feet,
The small feet of my own baby
That never felt the heat.

The small feet of my son,
Cold as the graveyard sod;
My little, dumb, unchristened one
That may not win to God.

"Come in, dear babe," I cry,
Opening the door so wide.
The leaves go stealing softly by;
How dark it is outside!

And though I kneel and pray
Long on the threshold-stone
The little feet press on their way,
And I am ever alone.

Katharine Tynan Hinkson

Mothers of Men

AN ABORIGINAL MOTHER'S LAMENT

STILL farther would I fly, my child,
To make thee safer yet,
From the unsparing white man,
With his dread hand murder-wet!
I'll bear thee on as I have borne
With stealthy steps wind-fleet,
But the dark night shrouds the forest,
And thorns are in my feet.

O moan not! I would give this braid —
Thy father's gift to me —
But for a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

Ah! spring not to his name — no more
To glad us may he come —
He is smoldering into ashes
Beneath the blasted gum:
All charred and blasted by the fire
The white man kindled there,
And fed with our slaughtered kindred
Till heaven-high went its glare!

And but for thee, I would their fire
Had eaten me as fast!
Hark! Hark! I hear his death-cry
Yet lengthening up the blast!

To Mother

But no—when his bound hands had signed
The way that we should fly,
On the roaring pyre flung bleeding—
I saw thy father die!

No more shall his loud tomahawk
Be plied to win our cheer,
Or the shining fish pools darken
Beneath his shadowing spear:
The fading tracks of his fleet foot
Shall guide not as before,
And the mountain-spirits mimic
His hunting call no more!

O moan not! I would give this braid—
Thy father's gift to me—
For but a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

Charles Harpur

LINES TO MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

O THAT those lips had language! Life has
passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee
last.
Those lips are thine,—thy own sweet smile
I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced
me;

Mothers of Men

Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
"Grieve not, my child; chase all thy fears
away!"

The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles time's tyrannic claim
To quench it!) here shines on me still the
same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bid'st me honor with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long. †
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own;
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian revery,
A momentary dream that thou art she.

My mother! when I learned that thou
wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, Life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a
kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,

To Mother

And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu.
But was it such? It was. Where thou art
gone,

Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting words shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,

Oft gave me promise of thy quick return;
What ardently I wished I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived;
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrows spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard
no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery
floor;

And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bawble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,
'T is now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our
own.

Mothers of Men

Short-lived possession ! but the record fair,
That memory keeps of all thy kindness
there,

Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly
laid, —

All this, and, more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and
breaks

That humor interposed too often makes, —
All this, still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honors to thee as my numbers may;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed
here,

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore
the hours

When, playing with thy vesture's tissued
flowers,

The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
I pricked them into paper with a pin,
(And thou wast happier than myself the
while,

Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head,
and smile,) —

To Mother

Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish
them here?

I would not trust my heart,—the dear de-
light

Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.

But no,—what here we call our life is such,
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain,
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from albion's
coast

(The storms all weathered and the ocean
crossed)

Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
Where spices breathe and brighter seasons
smile ;

There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers
gay, —

So thou, with sails how swift ! hast reached
the shore,

Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar ;
And thy loved consort, on the dangerous tide
Of life, long since has anchored by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always dis-
tressed, —

Mothers of Men

Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-
tossed,

Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and com-
pass lost ;

And day by day some current's thwarting
force

Sets me more distant from a prosperous
course.

Yet O, the thought that thou art safe, and
he! —

That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.

My boast is not that I deduce my birth

From loins enthroned, and rulers of the
earth ;

But higher far my proud pretensions rise, —

The son of parents passed into the skies.

And now farewell! — Time, unrevoked, has

run

His wonted course, yet what I wished is
done.

By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,

I seem to have lived my childhood o'er
again, —

To have renewed the joys that once were mine

Without the sin of violating thine ;

And while the wings of Fancy still are free,

And I can view this mimic show of thee,

Time has but half succeeded in his theft, —

Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

William Cowper

To Mother

MY MOTHER'S BIBLE

THIS book is all that's left me now, —
Tears will unbidden start, —
With faltering lip and throbbing brow
I press it to my heart.
For many generations past,
Here is our family tree ;
My mother's hands this Bible clasped,
She, dying, gave it me.

Ah ! well do I remember those
Whose names these records bear ;
Who round the hearthstone used to
close,
After the evening prayer,
And speak of what these pages said
In tones my heart would thrill !
Though they are with the silent dead,
Here are they living still !

My father read this holy book
To brothers, sisters, dear ;
How calm was my poor mother's look,
Who loved God's word to hear !
Her angel face, — I see it yet !
What thronging memories come !
Again that little group is met
Within the halls of home !

Mothers of Men

Thou truest friend man ever knew,
Thy constancy I've tried;
When all were false, I found thee true,
My counselor and guide.
The mines of earth no treasures give
That could this volume buy;
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die!

George Pope Morris

TWO SONS

I HAVE two sons, wife —
Two and yet the same;
One his wild way runs, wife,
Bringing us to shame.
The one is bearded, sunburnt, grim, and
fights across the sea,
The other is a little child who sits upon your
knee.

One is fierce and cold, wife,
As the wayward deep;
Him no arms could hold, wife,
Him no breast could keep.
He has tried our hearts for many a year, not
broken them; for he
Is still the sinless little one that sits upon
your knee.

To Mother

One may fall in fight, wife,
Is he not our son?
Pray with all your might, wife,
For the wayward one;
Pray for the dark, rough soldier, who fights
across the sea,
Because you love the little shade who smiles
upon your knee.

One across the foam, wife,
As I speak may fall;
But this one at home, wife,
Cannot die at all.
They both are only one; and how thankful
should we be,
We cannot lose the darling son who sits upon
your knee!

Robert Buchanan

MOTHER TO SON

BEFORE I knew the love of man
The lovely dream of you began.
When I said, "Jesus meek and mild,"
My Jesus was a little child.
I nursed the kitten on my knee,
And nursed you where no eye could see.
When I grew up to woman's grace
I saw you in your father's face,

Mothers of Men

Your hands were beating at my breast,
And gave my womanhood no rest,
Your little soul called each to each,
And laid bright heaven in our reach.
My body fed your body, son,
But birth 's a swift thing, swiftly done,
Compared to one-and-twenty years
Of feeding you with spirit's tears.
I could not make your mind and soul,
But my glad hands have kept you whole,
And tears have kept God's pastures green,
And washed the temple sweet and clean.
Think you that I have lived in vain
These years of wonder, joy, and pain?
The years when Jesus meek and mild
Was my beloved little child!
And when the first shy touch of things
Waked in my heart a thousand springs,
And bade me open childhood's gate
And give my woman's hand to fate!
The moment when your groping hands
Bound me to life with ruthless bands,
When all my living became a prayer,
And all my days built up a stair
For your young feet that trod behind,
That you an aspiring way should find!
Think you that life can give you pain,
Which does not stab in me again?
Think you that life can give you pleasure
Which is not my undying treasure?

To Mother

Think you that life can give you shame
Which does not make my pride go lame?
And you can do no evil thing
Which sears not me with poisoned sting.
Because of all that I have done,
Remember me in life, O son!
Keep that proud body fine and fair,
My love is monumented there.
For my love make no woman weep,
For my love hold no woman cheap,
And see you give no woman scorn
For that dark night when you were born.
Beloved, all my years belong
To you, go thread them for a song.

Irene Rutherford McLeod

ONE MOTHER

MARY!

I'm quite alone in all the world,
Into such bright sharp pain of anguish
hurled
I cannot pray wise comfortable things;
Death's plunged me deep in hell, and given
me wings
For terrible strange vastnesses; no hand
In all this empty spirit-driven space; I stand
Alone, and whimpering in my soul. I plod
Among wild stars, and hide my face from
God.

Mothers of Men

God frightens me. He's strange. I know
Him not.

And all my usual prayers I have forgot:
But you—you had a son—I remember now!
You are not Mary of the virgin brow!
You agonized for Jesus! You went down
Into the ugly depths for him. Your crown
Is my crown! I've seen you in the street,
Begging your way for broken bread and
meat:

I've seen you in trams, in shops, among old
faces,

Young eyes, brave lips, broad backs, in all
the places

Where women work, and weep, in pain, in
pride.

Your hands were gnarled that held him
when he died!

Not the fair hands that painters give you,
white

And slim. You never had such hands: night
And day you laboured, night and day, from
child

To woman. You were never soft and mild,
But strong-limbed, patient, brown-skinned
from the sun,

Deep-bosomed, brave-eyed, holy, holy One!
I know you now! I seek you, Mary! Spread
Your compassionate skirts! I bring to you
my dead!

To Mother

This was my man. I bore him. I did not
know

Then how he crowned me, but I felt it so.
He was my all the world. I loved him best
When he was helpless, clamouring at my
breast.

Mothers are made like that. You'll under-
stand

Who held your Jesus helpless in your hand
And loved his impotence. But as he grew
I watched him, always jealously, I knew
Each line of his young body, every tone
Of speech; his pains, his triumphs were my
own.

I saw the down come on his cheeks with
dread,

And soon I had to reach to hold his head
And stroke his mop of hair. I watched his eyes
When women crossed his ways, and I was
wise

For him who had no wisdom. He was young,
And loathed my care, and lashed me with
youth's tongue.

Splendidly merciless, casual of age, his scorn
Was sweet to me of whom his strength was
born.

. . . Besides, when he was more than six
foot tall

He kept the smile he had when he was
small! . . .

Mothers of Men

And still no woman had him. I was glad
Of that — and then O God! The world ran
mad!

Almost before I knew, this noise was war;
Death and not women took the son I bore . . .

You 'll know him when you see him: first of
all

Because he 'll smile that way when he was
small;

And then his eyes! They never changed
from blue

To duller grey, as other children's do,
But like his childish dreams he kept his
eyes

Vivid, and deeply clear, and vision wise.
Seek for him, Mary! Bright among the
ghosts

Of other women's sons he 'll star those hosts
Of shining boys! (He always topped his
class

At school!) Lean forward, Mary, as they
pass,

And touch him! When you see his eyes
you 'll weep

And think him your own Jesus! Let him
sleep

In your deep bosom, Mary, then you 'll
see

His lashes, how they curl, so childishly

To Mother

You'll weep again, and rock him on your
heart

As I did once, that night we had to part.
He'll come to you all bloody and be-mired,
But let him sleep, my dear, for he'll be tired,
And very shy. If he'd come home to me
I would n't ask the neighbours in to tea . . .
He always hated crowds . . . I'd let him
be. . . .

And then perhaps you'll take him by the
hand

And comfort him from fear when he must
stand

Before God's dreadful throne; then, will you
call

That boy whose bullet made my darling fall,
And take him by the other hand, and say . . .

*"O God, whose Son the hands of men did
slay,*

*These are Thy children who do take away
The sins of the world. . . ."*

Irene Rutherford McLeod

Mothers of Men

AN ENGLISH MOTHER¹

EVERY week of every season out of English
ports go forth,
White of sail or white of trail, East, or West,
or South, or North,
Scattering like a flight of pigeons, half a
hundred home-sick ships,
Bearing half a hundred striplings — each with
kisses on his lips
Of some silent mother, fearful lest she shows
herself too fond,
Giving him to bush or desert as one pays a
sacred bond,
— Tell us, you who hide your heartbreak,
which is sadder, when all 's done,
To repine an English mother, or to roam, an
English son?

You who shared your babe's first sorrow when
his cheek no longer pressed
On the perfect, snow-and-roseleaf beauty of
your mother-breast,
In the rigor of his nurture was your woman's
mercy mute,
Knowing he was doomed to exile with the
savage and the brute?

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To Mother

Did you school yourself to absence all his
adolescent years,
That, though you be torn with parting, he
should never see the tears?
Now his ship has left the offing for the many-
mouthèd sea,
This your guerdon, empty heart, by empty
bed to bend the knee?

And if he be but the latest thus to leave your
dwindling board,
Is a sorrow less for being added to a sor-
row's hoard?
Is the mother-pain duller that to-day his
brothers stand,
Facing ambuscades of Congo, or alarms from
Zululand?
Toil, where blizzards drift the snow like
smoke across the plains of death?
Faint, where tropic fens at morning steam
with fever-laden breath?
Die, that in some distant river's veins the
English blood may run —
Mississippi, Yangtze, Ganges, Nile, Mac-
kenzie, Amazon?

Ah! you still must wait and suffer in a soli-
tude untold,
While your sisters of the nations call you
passive, call you cold —

Mothers of Men

Still must scan the news of sailings, breath-
less search the slow gazette,
Find the dreadful name . . . and, later, get
his blithe farewell! And yet —
Shall the lonely hearthstone shame the legions
who have died
Grudging not the price their country pays
for progress and for pride?
— Nay; but, England, do not ask us thus to
emulate your scars
Until women's tears are reckoned in the
budgets of your wars.

Robert Underwood Johnson

MATRES DOLOROSÆ

YE Spartan mothers, gentle ones,
Of lion-hearted, loving sons
Fall'n, the flower of English youth,
To a barbarous foe in a land uncouth:—

O what a delicate sacrifice!
Unequal the stake and costly the price
As when the queen of Love deplor'd
Her darling by the wild beast gor'd.

They rode to war as if to the hunt,
But ye at home, ye bore the brunt,
Bore the siege of torturing fears,
Fed your hope on the bread of tears.

To Mother

Proud and spotless warriors they
With love or sword to lead the way;
For ye had cradled heart and hand,
The commander hearken'd to your command.

Ah, weeping mothers, now all is o'er,
Ye know your honor and mourn no more:
Nor ask ye a name in England's story,
Who gave your dearest for her glory.

Robert Bridges

THE ABSENT SOLDIER SON

LORD, I am weeping. As Thou wilt, O Lord,
Do with him as Thou wilt; but O my God,
Let him come back to die! Let not the fowls
O' the air defile the body of my child,
My own fair child, that when he was a babe,
I lift up in my arms and gave to Thee!
Let not his garment, Lord, be vilely parted,
Nor the fine linen which these hands have
 spun

Fall to the stranger's lot! Shall the wild bird,
That would have pilfered of the ox, this year
Disdain the pens and stalls? Shall her blind
 young

That on the flock and moult of brutish
 beasts

Had been too happy, sleep in cloth of gold

Mothers of Men

Whereof each thread is to this beating heart
As a peculiar darling? Lo, the flies
Hum o'er him! lo, a feather from the crow
Falls in his parted lips! Lo, his dead eyes
See not the raven! Lo, the worm, the worm,
Creeps from his festering corse? My God!
my God!

.
O Lord, Thou doest well. I am content.
If Thou have need of him he shall not stay.
But as one calleth to a servant, saying
"At such a time be with me," so, O Lord,
Call him to Thee! O, bid him not in haste
Straight whence he standeth. Let him lay
aside
The soiled tools of labor. Let him wash
His hands of blood. Let him array himself
Meet for his Lord, pure from the sweat and
fume
Of corporal travail! Lord, if he must die,
Let him die here. O, take him where Thou
gavest!

Sidney Dobell

MOTHER AND SON

BRIGHTLY for him the future smiled,
The world was all untried;
He had been a boy, almost a child,
In your household till he died.

To Mother

And you saw him young and strong and fair
But yesterday depart;
And you now know he is lying there
Shot to death through the heart!

Alas, for the step so proud and true
That struck on the war-path's track;
Alas, to go, as he went from you,
And to come, as they brought him back!

One shining curl from that bright young head,
Held sacred in your home,
Is all that you have to keep in his stead
In the years that are to come.

You may claim of his beauty and his youth
Only this little part —
It is not much with which to stanch
The wound in a mother's heart!

It is not much with which to dry
The bitter tears that flow;
Not much in your empty hands to lie
As the seasons come and go.

Yet he has not lived and died in vain,
For proudly you may say
He has left a name without a stain
For your tears to wash away.

Mothers of Men

And evermore shall your life be blest,
Though your treasures now are few,
Since you gave for your country's good the
best
God ever gave to you!

Phœbe Cary

MOTHERHOOD

MOTHER of Christ long slain, forth glided
she,

Following the children joyously astir
Under the cedars and the olive-tree,
Pausing to let their laughter float to her.

Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,
She saw a little Christ in every face.

When lo! another woman, passing near,
Yearned o'er the tender life that filled the
place,

And Mary sought the woman's hand, and
said:

"I know thee not, yet know thee memory-
tossed

And what hath led thee here, as I am
led —

These bring to thee a child beloved and
lost."

"How radiant was my little one!

And He was fair,

To Mother

Yea fairer than the fairest sun,
And like its rays through amber spun
His sun-bright hair,
Still, I can see it shine and shine!"
"Even so," the woman said, "was mine."

"His ways were ever darling ways,"
And Mary smiled, —
"So soft and clinging! Glad relays
Of love were all his precious days —
My little child
Was like an infinite that gleamed."
"Even so was mine," the woman dreamed.

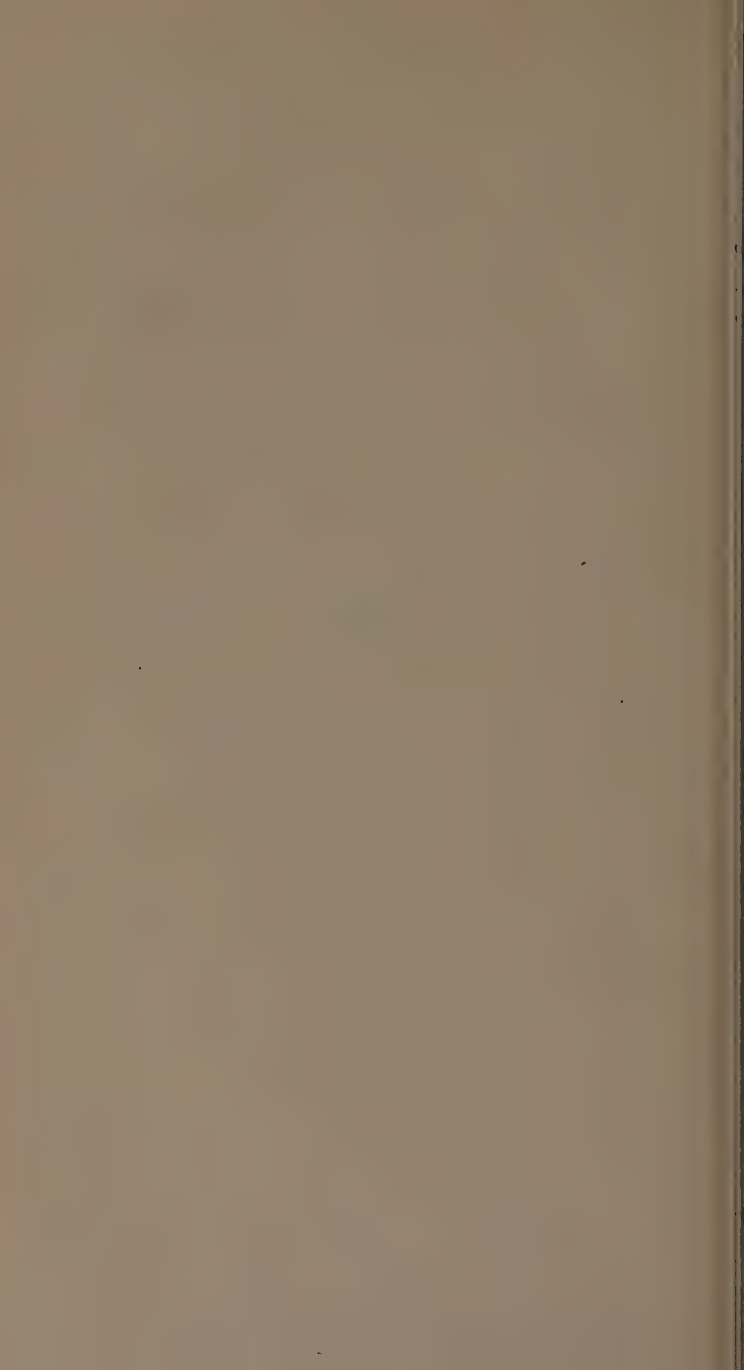
Then whispered Mary: "Tell me, thou
Of thine!" And she:
"Oh, mine was rosy as a bough
Blooming with roses, sent, somehow,
To bloom for me!
His balmy fingers left a thrill
Within my breast that warms me still."

Then gazed she down some wilder, darker
hour
And said, when Mary questioned knowing
not:
"Who art thou, mother of so sweet a
flower?"
"I am the mother of Iscariot."

Agnes Lee

CHRISTMAS MOTHER POEMS





HYMN ON THE NATIVITY

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger
lies ;

Nature, in awe of him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize :
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty para-
mour.

Only with speeches fair
She wooes the gentle air,
To hide her guilty front with innocent
snow ;

And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden-white to throw ;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deform-
ities.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace :
She, crowned with olive green, came softly
sliding

To Mother

Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
 With turtle wing the amorous clouds di-
 viding;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea
 and land.

No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around:
 The idle spear and shield were high up-
 hung;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
 The trumpet spake not to the armèd
 throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign lord
 was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light
 His reign of peace upon the earth be-
 gan:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
 Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the
 charmèd wave.

Christmas Mother Poems

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
 Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
 Or Lucifer had often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespoke, and bid
 them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
 The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
 The new-enlightened world no more should
 need;
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axle-
 tree, could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
 Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
 Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy
 keep.

To Mother

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
 As never was by mortal fingers strook,
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
 As all their souls in blissful rapture took :
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each
 heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
 Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrill-
 ing,
Now was almost won,
To think her part was done,
 And that her reign had here its last ful-
 filling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier
 union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
 That with long beams the shame-faced
 night arrayed;
The helmèd cherubim,
And sworded seraphim,
 Are seen in glittering ranks with wings
 displayed,

Christmas Mother Poems

Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born heir.

Such music as 't is said
Before was never made,
 But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
 And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
 If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
 And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
And, with your ninefold harmony,
Make up full concert to the angelic symphony.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
 Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;

To Mother

And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
 And leprous Sin will melt from earthly
 mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peer-
 ing day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
 Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories
 wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
 With radiant feet the tissued clouds down
 steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace
 hall.

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so;
 The babe yet lies in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
 So both himself and us to glorify:
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder
 through the deep,

Christmas Mother Poems

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds
outbrake;
The aged earth aghast,
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the center shake;
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall
spread his throne.

And then at last our bliss,
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for, from this happy day,
The old dragon, under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swings the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof in words
deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos
leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the pro-
phetic cell.

To Mother

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures mourn with midnight plaint.
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim
 With that twice-battered God of Palestine;
And moonèd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;

Christmas Mother Poems

The Libyac Hammon shrinks his horn ;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded
Thammuz mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue :
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace
blue:

The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with
lowings loud ;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
Naught but profoundest hell can be his
shroud ;
In vain with timbreled anthems dark
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his wor-
shipèd ark.

He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky
eyne ;

To Mother

Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,

Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
Our babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the
damned crew.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several
grave;

And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their
moon-loved maze.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest;

Time is our tedious song should here have
ending:

Heaven's youngest-teemèd star

Hath fixed her polished car,

Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp
attending;

And all about the courtly stable

Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serv-
iceable.

John Milton

A MOTHER IN EGYPT

About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt :
and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die,
from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne,
even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is be-
hind the mill.

Is the noise of grief in the palace over the
river

For this silent one at my side?

There came a hush in the night, and he rose
with his hands a-quiver

Like lotus petals adrift on the swing of the
tide.

O small cold hands, the day groweth old for
sleeping!

O small still feet, rise up, for the hour is
late!

Rise up, my son, for I hear them mourning
and weeping

In the temple down by the gate!

Hushed is the face that was wont to brighten
with laughter

When I sang at the mill;

And silence unbroken shall greet the sor-
rowful dawns hereafter, —

The house shall be still.

Voice after voice takes up the burden of
wailing —

To Mother

Do you not heed, do you not hear? — in the
 high priest's house by the wall.
But mine is the grief, and their sorrow is all
 unvailing.
Will he awake at their call?

Something I saw of the broad dim wings
 half folding
The passionless brow.
Something I saw of the sword that the shad-
 owy hands were holding, —
What matters it now?
I held you close, dear face, as I knelt and
 harkened
To the wind that cried last night like a soul
 in sin,
When the broad bright stars dropped down
 and the soft sky darkened
And the presence moved therein.

I have heard men speak in the market-place
 of the city,
Low-voiced, in a breath,
Of a God who is stronger than ours, and
 who knows not changing nor pity,
Whose anger is death.
Nothing I know of the lords of the outland
 races,

Christmas Mother Poems

But Amud is gentle and Hathor the mother
 is mild,
And who would descend from the light of
 the Peaceful Places
To war on a child?

Yet here he lies, with a scarlet pomegranate
 petal
Blown down on his cheek.
The slow sun sinks to the sand like a shield
 of some burnished metal,
But he does not speak.
I have called, I have sung, but he neither
 will hear nor waken;
So lightly, so whitely, he lies in the curve
 of my arm,
Like a feather let fall from the bird the
 arrow hath taken, —
Who could see him, and harm?

“The swallow flies home to her sleep in the
 eaves of the altar,
And the crane to her nest.” —
So do we sing o’er the mill, and why, ah,
 why should I falter,
Since he goes to his rest?
Does he play in their flowers as he played
 among these with his mother?

To Mother

Do the gods smile downward and love him
and give him their care?
Guard him well, O ye gods, till I come; lest
the wrath of that Other
Should reach to him there.

Marjorie L. C. Pickthall

CHRISTMAS CAROL

As Joseph was a-waukin',
He heard an angel sing,
"This night shall be the birthnight
Of Christ our heavenly King.

"His birth-bed shall be neither
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in the oxen's stall.

"He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in the wooden manger
That lieth in the mould.

"He neither shall be washen
With white wine nor with red,
But with the fair spring water
That on you shall be shed.

Christmas Mother Poems

“He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair, white linen
That usen babies all.”

As Joseph was a-waukin',
Thus did the angel sing,
And Mary's son at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year;
And light you up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

Unknown

REGINA CÆLI

SAY, did his sisters wonder what could
Joseph see
In a mild, silent little Maid like thee?
And was it awful in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each
one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in
Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this.
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:

To Mother

Wondrous, for, though
True Virgin lives not but does know,
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd)
That God lies really in her breast,
Of thine He made His special nest
And so
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they 've trod;
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God!

Coventry Patmore

CHRIST THE MENDICANT

A STRANGER, to His own
He came; and one alone,
Who knew not sin,
His lowliness believed,
And in her soul conceived
To let Him in.

He naked was, and she
Of her humanity
A garment wove:
He hungered; and she gave,
What most His heart did crave,
A Mother's love.

John Banister Tabb

Christmas Mother Poems

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

THERE 's a song in the air !
There 's a star in the sky !
There 's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry !

And the star rains its fire while the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

There 's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.

Ay ! the star rains its fire and the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

In the light of that star
Lie the ages impearled ;
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world.

Every hearth is aflame, and the Beautiful sing
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King.

We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the heavenly throng.

To Mother

Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in his cradle our Saviour and
King.

Josiah Gilbert Holland

A LITTLE CHILD'S HYMN

THOU that once, on mother's knee,
Wast a little one like me,
When I wake or go to bed
Lay thy hands about my head ;
Let me feel thee very near,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear.

Be beside me in the light,
Close by me through all the night ;
Make me gentle, kind, and true,
Do what mother bids me do ;
Help and cheer me when I fret,
And forgive when I forget.

Once wast thou in cradle laid,
Baby bright in manger-shade,
With the oxen and the cows,
And the lambs outside the house :
Now thou art above the sky :
Canst thou hear a baby cry ?

Thou art nearer when we pray,
Since thou art so far away ;

Christmas Mother Poems

Thou my little hymn wilt hear,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear,
Thou that once, on mother's knee,
Wast a little one like me.

Francis Turner Palgrave

A CAROL

HE came all so still
Where His mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
Where His mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

He came all so still
To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she!
Well might such a lady
God's mother be.

Unknown.

LULLABIES



SEA SLUMBER-SONG

SEA-BIRDS are asleep,
The world forgets to weep,
Sea murmurs her soft slumber-song
On the shadowy sand
Of this elfin land ;
“ I, the Mother mild,
Hush thee, O my child,
Forget the voices wild !
Isles in elfin light
Dream, the rocks and caves,
Lull'd by whispering waves,
Veil their marbles bright,
Foam glimmers faintly white
Upon the shelly sand
Of this elfin land ;
Sea-sound, like violins,
To slumber woos and wins,
I murmur my soft slumber-song,
Leave woes, and wails, and sins,
Ocean's shadowy night
Breathes good-night,
Good-night ! ”

Roden Noel

SWEET AND LOW

SWEET and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one,
 sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
 sleep.

Alfred Tennyson

A CRADLE HYMN

HUSH! my dear, lie still and slumber,
 Holy angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
 Gently falling on thy head.

Lullabies

Sleep, my babe ; thy food and raiment,
House and home, thy friends provide ;
All without thy care or payment :
All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou 'rt attended
Than the Son of God could be,
When from heaven He descended
And became a child like thee !

Soft and easy is thy cradle :
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay,
When His birthplace was a stable
And His softest bed was hay.

Blessèd babe ! what glorious features —
Spotless fair, divinely bright !
Must he dwell with brutal creatures ?
How could angels bear the sight ?

Was there nothing but a manger
Cursèd sinners could afford
To receive the heavenly stranger ?
Did they thus affront their Lord ?

Soft, my child : I did not chide thee,
Though my song might sound too hard ;
'T is thy mother sits beside thee,
And her arms shall be thy guard.

To Mother

Yet to read the shameful story
How the Jews abused their King,
How they served the Lord of Glory,
Makes me angry while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,
Telling wonders from the sky!
Where they sought Him, there they found
Him,
With His Virgin mother by.

See the lovely babe a-dressing;
Lovely infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the mother's blessing
Soothed and hushed the holy child.

Lo, He slumbers in His manger,
Where the hornèd oxen fed;
Peace, my darling; here's no danger,
Here's no ox anear thy bed.

'T was to save thee, child, from dying,
Save my dear from burning flame,
Bitter groans and endless crying,
That thy blest Redeemer came.

May'st thou live to know and fear Him,
Trust and love Him all thy days;
Then go dwell forever near Him,
See His face, and sing His praise.

Isaac Watts

Lullabies

CRADLE SONG

ERE the moon begins to rise
Or a star to shine,
All the blue bells close their eyes—
So close thine,
Thine, dear, thine!

Birds are sleeping in the nest
On the swaying bough,
Thus, against the mother-breast—
So sleep thou,
Sleep, sleep, thou!
Thomas Bailey Aldrich

SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP

SLEEP, baby, sleep!
Thy father watches the sheep;
Thy mother is shaking the dream-land tree,
And down falls a little dream on thee:
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep!
The large stars are the sheep,
The little stars are the lambs I guess,
The fair moon is the shepherdess:
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Anonymous

To Mother

JAPANESE LULLABY

SLEEP, little pigeon, and fold your wings, —
Little blue pigeon with velvet eyes;
Sleep to the singing of mother-bird swing-
ing —
Swinging the nest where her little one lies.

Away out yonder I see a star, —
Silvery star with a tinkling song;
To the soft dew falling I hear it calling —
Calling and tinkling the night along.

In through the window a moonbeam
comes, —
Little gold moonbeam with misty wings;
All silently creeping, it asks: "Is he sleep-
ing —
Sleeping and dreaming while mother
sings?"

Up from the sea there floats the sob
Of the waves that are breaking upon the
shore,
As though they were groaning in anguish,
and moaning —
Bemoaning the ship that shall come no
more.

Lullabies

But sleep, little pigeon, and fold your
wings, —

Little blue pigeon with mournful eyes;
Am I not singing? — see, I am swing-
ing —

Swinging the nest where my darling
lies.

Eugene Field

THE COTTAGER'S LULLABY

THE days are cold, the nights are long;
The north-wind sings a doleful song;
Then hush again upon my breast,
All merry things are now at rest,
Save thee, my pretty love!

The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,
The crickets long have ceased their mirth;
There's nothing stirring in the house
Save one wee, hungry, nibbling mouse;
Then why so busy thou?

Nay, start not at that sparkling light;
'T is but the moon that shines so bright
On the window-pane bedropped with rain;
Then, little darling! sleep again,
And wake when it is day.

Dorothy Wordsworth

To Mother

SWEDISH MOTHER'S LULLABY

THERE sitteth a dove, so fair and white,
All on a lily spray ;
And she listeneth how to the Saviour above
The little children pray.

LIGHTLY she spreads her friendly wings,
And to heaven's gate hath sped,
And unto the Father in heaven she bears
The prayers the children have said.

AND back she comes from heaven's gate,
And brings — that dove so mild —
From the Father in heaven, who hears her
speak,
A blessing for every child.

Frederika Bremer

THE ROAD TO SLUMBER-LAND

WHAT is the road to slumber-land and when
does the baby go ?
The road lies straight through mother's arms
when the sun is sinking low.

HHE goes by the drowsy land of nod to the
music of lullaby,
When all wee lambs are safe in the fold,
under the evening sky.

Lullabies

A soft little nightgown clean and white; a
face washed sweet and fair;
A mother brushing the tangles out of the
silken, golden hair.

Two little tired, satiny feet, from shoe and
stocking free;
Two little palms together clasped at the
mother's patient knee.

Some baby words that are drowsily lisped to
the tender Shepherd's ear;
And a kiss that only a mother can place on
the brow of her baby dear.

A little round head that nestles at last close
to the mother's breast,
And then the lullaby soft and low, singing
the song of rest.

And closer and closer the blue-veined lids
are hiding the baby eyes,
As over the road to slumber-land the dear
little traveler hies.

For this is the way, through mother's arms,
all little babies go
To the beautiful city of slumber-land when
the sun is sinking low.

Mary Dow Brine

To Mother

WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

WYNKEN, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe, —
Sailed on a river of crystal light
Into a sea of dew.

“Where are you going, and what do you
wish?”

The old moon asked the three.

“We have come to fish for the herring fish
That live in this beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we!”

Said Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe;
And the wind that sped them all night
long

Ruffled the waves of dew.

The little stars were the herring fish
That lived in that beautiful sea —

“Now cast your nets wherever you wish, —
Never afeard are we!”

So cried the stars to the fishermen three,
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Lullabies

All night long their nets they threw
To the stars in the twinkling foam, —
Then down from the skies came the wooden
shoe,

Bringing the fishermen home :
'Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed
As if it could not be ;
And some folk thought 't was a dream they 'd
dreamed

Of sailing that beautiful sea ;
But I shall name you the fishermen
three :

Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
Is a wee one's trundle-bed ;
So shut your eyes while Mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen
three: —

Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Eugene Field

To Mother

AULD DADDY DARKNESS

AULD Daddy Darkness creeps frae his hole,
Black as a blackamoor, blin' as a mole :
Stir the fire till it lowes, let the bairnie
 sit,
Auld Daddy Darkness is no want it yit.

See him in the corners hidin' frae the licht,
See him at the window gloomin' at the
 nicht;
Turn up the gas licht, close the shutters a',
An' Auld Daddy Darkness will flee far
 awa'.

Awa' to hide the birdie within its cosy nest,
Awa' to lap the wee flooers on their mither's
 breast,
Awa' to loosen Gaffer Toil frae his daily ca',
For Auld Daddy Darkness is kindly to a'.

He comes when we're weary to wean's frae
 oor waes,
He comes when the bairnies are getting off
 their claes ;
To cover them sae cosy, an' bring bonnie
 dreams,
So Auld Daddy Darkness is better than he
 seems.

Lullabies

Steek yer een, my wee tot, ye'll see Daddy
 then;
He's in below the bed claes, to cuddle ye
 he's fain;
Noo nestle to his bosie, sleep and dream yer
 fill,
Till Wee Davie Daylicht comes keekin' owre
 the hill.

James Ferguson

MOTHER-SONG

(From "Prince Lucifer")

WHITE little hands!
 Pink little feet!
Dimpled all over,
 Sweet, sweet, sweet!
What dost thou wail for?
 The unknown? the unseen?
The ills that are coming,
 The joys that have been?

Cling to me closer,
 Closer and closer,
Till the pain that is purer
 Hath banished the grosser.
Drain, drain at the stream, love,
 Thy hunger is freeing,
That was born in a dream, love,
 Along with thy being!

To Mother

Little fingers that feel
For their home on my breast,
Little lips that appeal
For their nurture, their rest!
Why, why dost thou weep, dear?
Nay, stifle thy cries,
Till the dew of thy sleep, dear,
Lies soft on thine eyes.

Alfred Austin

SEPHESTIA'S LULLABY

(From "Menaphon")

WEEP not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for
thee.

Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe;
Fortune changèd made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for
thee.

Streaming tears that never stint,
Like pearl-drops from a flint,

Lullabies

Fell by course from his eyes,
That one another's place supplies ;
Thus he grieved in every part,
Tears of blood fell from his heart,
When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my
knee ;

When thou art old there's grief enough for
thee.

The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt ;
More he crowed, more we cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide :
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bliss,
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for
thee.

Robert Greene

CRADLE SONG

SLEEP, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night ;
[Sleep, sleep ; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

To Mother

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful night shall break.

William Blake

LULLABY OF AN INFANT CHIEF

O, HUSH thee, my babie, thy sire was a
knight,
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright ;
The woods and the glens, from the towers
which we see,
They are all belonging, dear babie, to thee.
O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, fear not the bugle, though loudly it
blows,
It calls but the warders that guard thy re-
pose ;

Lullabies

Their bows would be bended, their blades
would be red,

Ere the step of a foeman draws near to thy
bed.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, hush thee, my babie, the time soon will
come,

When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet
and drum ;

Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while
you may,

For strife comes with manhood, and waking
with day.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

Walter Scott

The JOY of MOTHERHOOD



THE FIRSTBORN

So fair, so dear, so warm upon my bosom,
And in my hands the little rosy feet.
Sleep on, my little bird, my lamb, my blossom ;
Sleep on, sleep on, my sweet.

What is it God hath given me to cherish,
This living, moving wonder which is mine —
Mine only? Leave it with me or I perish,
Dear Lord of love divine.

Dear Lord, 't is wonderful beyond all wonder,
This tender miracle vouchsafed to me,
One with myself, yet just as far asunder
That I myself may see.

Flesh of my flesh, and yet so subtly linking
New selfs with old, all things that I have been
With present joys beyond my former thinking
And future things unseen.

To Mother

There life began, and here it links with
 heaven,
The golden chain of years scarce dipped
 adown
From birth, ere once again a hold is given
 And nearer to God's Throne.

Seen, held in arms and clasped around so
 tightly, —
My love, my bird, I will not let thee go.
Yet soon the little rosy feet must lightly
 Go pattering to and fro.

Mine, Lord, all mine Thy gift and loving
 token.
Mine — yes or no, unseen its soul divine?
Mine by the chain of love with links un-
 broken,
Dear Saviour, Thine and mine.
 John Arthur Goodchild

BABY-LAND

“How many miles to Baby-Land?”
 “Any one can tell;
 Up one flight,
 To the right;
 Please to ring the bell.”

The Joy of Motherhood

“What can you see in Baby-Land?”

“Little folks in white —

Downy heads,

Cradle-beds,

Faces pure and bright!”

“What do they do in Baby-Land?”

“Dream and wake and play,

Laugh and crow,

Shout and grow;

Jolly times have they!”

“What do they say in Baby-Land?”

“Why, the oddest things;

Might as well

Try to tell

What a birdie sings!”

“Who is the Queen of Baby-Land?”

“Mother, kind and sweet;

And her love,

Born above,

Guides the little feet.”

George Cooper

MOTHER'S SONG

MY heart is like a fountain true

That flows and flows with love to you.

As chirps the lark unto the tree

So chirps my pretty babe to me.

And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

To Mother

There's not a rose where'er I seek,
As comely as my baby's cheek.
There's not a comb of honey-bee,
So full of sweets as babe to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

There's not a star that shines on high,
Is brighter than my baby's eye.
There's not a boat upon the sea,
Can dance as baby does to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

No silk was ever spun so fine
As is the hair of baby mine.
My baby smells more sweet to me
Than smells in spring the elder tree.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

A little fish swims in the well,
So in my heart does baby dwell.
A little flower blows on the tree,
My baby is the flower to me,
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

The Queen has sceptre, crown and ball,
You are my sceptre, crown and all.
For all her robes of royal silk,
More fair your skin, as white as milk.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

The Joy of Motherhood

Ten thousand parks where deer do run,
Ten thousand roses in the sun,
Ten thousand pearls beneath the sea,
My babe more precious is to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

Unknown

CRADLE SONG

SLEEP, little baby of mine,
Night and the darkness are near,
But Jesus looks down
Through the shadows that frown,
And baby has nothing to fear.

Shut, little sleepy blue eyes;
Dear little head, be at rest;
Jesus, like you,
Was a baby once, too,
And slept on His own mother's
 breast.

Sleep, little baby of mine,
Soft on your pillow so white;
Jesus is here
To watch over you, dear,
And nothing can harm you to-
 night.

To Mother

O, little darling of mine,
What can you know of the bliss,
The comfort I keep,
Awake and asleep,
Because I am certain of this?

Unknown

CRADLE SONG

(From "Bitter-Sweet")

WHAT is the little one thinking about?
Very wonderful things, no doubt!
Unwritten history!
Unfathomed mystery!
Yet he laughs and cries, and eats and drinks,
And chuckles and crows, and nods and
winks,
As if his head were as full of kinks
And curious riddles as any sphinx!
Warped by colic, and wet by tears,
Punctured by pins, and tortured by fears,
Our little nephew will lose two years;
And he'll never know
Where the summers go; —
He need not laugh, for he'll find it so!

Who can tell what a baby thinks?
Who can follow the gossamer links
By which the mannikin feels his way

The Joy of Motherhood

Out from the shore of the great unknown,
Blind, and wailing, and alone,

Into the light of day? —

Out from the shore of the unknown sea,

Tossing in pitiful agony; —

Of the unknown sea that reels and rolls,

Specked with the barks of little souls, —

Barks that were launched on the other side,

And slipped from Heaven on an ebbing
tide!

What does he think of his mother's eyes?

What does he think of his mother's hair?

What of the cradle-roof that flies

Forward and backward through the air?

What does he think of his mother's breast,

Bare and beautiful, smooth and white,

Seeking it ever with fresh delight, —

Cup of his life, and couch of his rest?

What does he think when her quick embrace

Presses his hand and buries his face

Deep where the heart-throbs sink and swell

With a tenderness she can never tell,

Though she murmur the words

Of all the birds, —

Words she has learned to murmur well?

Now he thinks he'll go to sleep!

I can see the shadow creep

Over his eyes, in soft eclipse,

Over his brow, and over his lips,

Out to his little finger-tips!

To Mother

Softly sinking, down he goes !
Down he goes ! down he goes !
See ! he is hushed in sweet repose !

Josiah Gilbert Holland

A SONG OF TWILIGHT

OH, to come home once more, when the dusk
is falling,
To see the nursery lighted and the chil-
dren's table spread ;
"Mother, mother, mother !" the eager voices
calling,
"The baby was so sleepy that he had to go
to bed !"

Oh, to come home once more, and see the
smiling faces,
Dark head, bright head, clustered at the
pane ;
Much the years have taken, when the heart
its path retraces,
But until time is not for me, the image
will remain.

Men and women now they are, standing
straight and steady,
Grave heart, gay heart, fit for life's em-
prise ;

The Joy of Motherhood

Shoulder set to shoulder, how should they be
but ready!

The future shines before them with the
light of their own eyes.

Still each answers to my call; no good has
been denied me,

My burdens have been fitted to the little
strength that's mine,

Beauty, pride and peace have walked by day
beside me,

The evening closes gently in, and how
can I repine?

But oh, to see once more, when the early dusk
is falling;

The nursery windows glowing and the
children's table spread;

"Mother, mother, mother!" the high child-
voices calling,

"He could n't stay awake for you, he had
to go to bed!"

Unknown

TUCKING THE BABY IN

THE dark-fringed eyelids slowly close
On eyes serene and deep;

Upon my breast my own sweet child
Has gently dropped to sleep;

To Mother

I kiss his soft and dimpled cheek,
I kiss his rounded chin,
Then lay him on his little bed,
And tuck my baby in.

How fair and innocent he lies;
Like some small angel strayed,
His face still warmed by God's own smile,
That slumbers unafraid;
Or like some new embodied soul,
Still pure from taint of sin —
My thoughts are reverent as I stoop
To tuck my baby in.

What toil must stain these tiny hands
That now lie still and white?
What shadows creep across the face
That shines with morning light?
These wee pink shoeless feet — how far
Shall go their lengthening tread,
When they no longer cuddled close
May rest upon this bed?

O what am I that I should train
An angel for the skies;
Or mix the potent draught that feeds
The soul within these eyes?
I reach him up to the sinless Hands
Before his cares begin, —
Great Father, with Thy folds of love,
O tuck my baby in.

Curtis May

The Joy of Motherhood

MOTHER AND CHILD

THE wind blew wide the casement, and
within —

It was the loveliest picture ! — a sweet child
Lay in its mother's arms, and drew its life,
In pauses, from the fountain, — the white
round

Part shaded by loose tresses, soft and dark,
Concealing, but still showing, the fair realm
Of so much rapture, as green shadowing
trees

With beauty shroud the brooklet. The red
lips

Were parted, and the cheek upon the breast
Lay close, and, like the young leaf of the
flower,

Wore the same color, rich and warm and
fresh : —

And such alone are beautiful. Its eye,
A full blue gem, most exquisitely set,
Looked archly on its world, — the little
imp,

As if it knew even then that such a wreath
Were not for all ; and with its playful hands
It drew aside the robe that hid its realm,
And peeped and laughed aloud, and so it
laid

Its head on the shrine of such pure joys,

To Mother

And, laughing, slept. And while it slept, the
tears

Of the sweet mother fell upon its cheek, —
Tears such as fall from April skies, and
bring

The sunlight after. They were tears of joy;
And the true heart of that young mother
then

Grew lighter, and she sang unconsciously
The silliest ballad-song that ever yet
Subdued the nursery's voices, and brought
sleep

To fold her sabbath wings above its couch.

William Gilmore Simms

MATERNITY

WITHIN the crib that stands beside my bed
A little form in sweet abandon lies
And as I bend above with misty eyes
I know how Mary's heart was comforted.

O world of Mothers! blest are we who know
The ecstasy — the deep God-given
thrill

That Mary felt when all the earth was
still

In the Judean starlight long ago!

Anne P. L. Field

The Joy of Motherhood

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

MY mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O, my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

“Look at the rising sun; there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat
away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men
receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

“And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of
love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

“For when our souls have learn'd the heat
to bear,
The cloud will vanish, when we shall hear
His voice,

To Mother

Saying 'Come out from the grove, my love
and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs re-
joice.' "

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud
free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we
joy.

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver
hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

William Blake

MY BIRD

(Lines written at Burmah in joy for a first-born)

ERE last year's morn had left the sky,
A birdling sought my Indian nest;
And folded, oh, so lovingly,
Her tiny wings upon my breast.

From morn till evening's purple tinge,
In winsome helplessness she lies;
Two rosy leaves with a silken fringe,
Shut softly on her starry eyes.

The Joy of Motherhood

There's not in Ind a lovelier bird;
Broad earth owns not a happier nest;
O God, thou hast a fountain stirred,
Whose waters never more shall rest.

This beautiful, mysterious thing,
This seeming visitant from heaven,
This bird with the immortal wing,
To me, to me, thy hand has given.

The pulse first caught its tiny stroke,
The blood its crimson hue, from mine;—
This life which I have dared invoke,
Henceforth, is parallel with thine.

A silent awe is in my room,
I tremble with delicious fear;
The future, with its light and gloom,
Time and eternity are here.

Doubts, hopes, in eager tumult rise,
Hear, O my God, one earnest prayer:
Room for my bird in Paradise,
And give her angel-plumage there.

Emily C. Judson

CHILDREN

CHILDREN are what the mothers are.
No fondest father's fondest care

To Mother

Can fashion so the infant heart
As those creative beams that dart,
With all their hopes and fears, upon
The cradle of a sleeping son.

His startled eyes with wonder see
A father near him on his knee,
Who wishes all the while to trace
The mother in his future face;
But 't is to her alone uprise
His waking arms; to her those eyes
Open with joy and not surprise.

Walter Savage Landor

MY LITTLE DEAR

MY little dear, so fast asleep,
Whose arms about me cling,
What kisses shall she have to keep,
While she is slumbering?

Upon her golden baby-hair,
The golden dreams I'll kiss
Which Life spread through my morning
fair,
And I have saved, for this.

Upon her baby eyes I'll press
The kiss Love gave to me,
When his great joy and loveliness
Made all things fair to see.

The Joy of Motherhood

And on her lips, with smiles astir,
Ah me, what prayer of old
May now be kissed to comfort her,
Should Love or Life grow cold.

Dollie Radford

THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE

THEY sin who tell us love can die :
With life all other passions fly,
All others are but vanity ;
In heaven ambition cannot dwell,
Nor avarice in the vaults of hell ;
Earthly these passions of the earth,
They perish where they have their
birth ;

But love is indestructible ;
Its holy flame for ever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven return-
eth.

Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times op-
press'd,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest :
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest-time of love is there.
Oh ! when a mother meets on high
The babe she lost in infancy,

To Mother

Hath she not then, for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the watchful night,
For all her sorrow, all her tears,
An over-payment of delight?

Robert Southey

“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE”

WHENE’ER there comes a little child,
My darling comes with him;
Whene’er I hear a birdie wild
Who sings his merry whim,
Mine sings with him:
If a low strain of music sails
Among melodious hills and dales,
When a white lamb or kitten leaps,
Or star, or vernal flower peeps,
When rainbow dew is pulsing joy,
Or sunny waves, or leaflets toy,
Then he who sleeps
Softly wakes within my heart;
With a kiss from him I start;
He lays his head upon my breast,
Tho’ I may not see my guest,
Dear bosom-guest!
In all that’s pure and fair and good,
I feel the spring-time of thy blood,
Hear thy whisper’d accents flow
To lighten woe,

The Joy of Motherhood

Feel them blend,
Although I fail to comprehend.
And if one woundeth with harsh word,
Or deed, a child, or beast, or bird,
It seems to strike weak Innocence
Through him, who hath for his defence
Thunder of the All-loving Sire,
And mine, to whom He gave the fire.

Roden Noel

OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER POEMS



MY MOTHER

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses pressed?
My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sang sweet lullaby,
And rocked me that I should not cry?
My Mother.

Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed?
My Mother.

When pain and sickness made me cry,
Who gazed upon my heavy eye,
And wept for fear that I should die?
My Mother.

Who dressed my doll in clothes so gay,
And taught me pretty how to play,
And minded all I had to say?
My Mother.

To Mother

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's Pleasant way?
My Mother.

And can I ever cease to be,
Affectionate and kind to thee,
Who was so very kind to me?
My Mother.

Ah! no, the thought I cannot bear,
And if God please my life to spare,
I hope I shall reward thy care,
My Mother.

When thou art feeble, old, and gray,
My healthy arms shall be thy stay,
And I will soothe thy pains away,
My Mother.

And when I see thee hang thy head,
'Twill be my turn to watch thy bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed,
My Mother.

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

For God, who lives above the skies,
Would look with vengeance in his eyes,
If I should ever dare despise

My Mother.

Jane Taylor

HALF-WAKING

I THOUGHT it was the little bed
I slept in long ago ;
A straight white curtain at the head,
And two smooth knobs below.

I thought I saw the nursery fire,
And in a chair well-known
My mother sat, and did not tire
With reading all alone.

If I should make the slightest sound
To show that I 'm awake,
She 'd rise, and lap the blankets round,
My pillow softly shake ;

Kiss me and turn my face to see
The shadows on the wall,
And then sing "Rousseau's Dream" to
me
Till fast asleep I fall.

To Mother

But this is not my little bed;
That time is far away:
With strangers now I live instead,
From dreary day to day.

William Allingham

TO A CHILD EMBRACING HIS MOTHER

LOVE thy mother, little one!
Kiss and clasp her neck again —
Hereafter she may have a son
Will kiss and clasp her neck in vain.
Love thy mother, little one!

Gaze upon her living eyes,
And mirror back her love for thee, —
Hereafter thou mayst shudder sighs
To meet them when they cannot see.
Gaze upon her living eyes!

Press her lips the while they glow
With love that they have often told, —
Hereafter thou mayst press in woe,
And kiss them till thine own are cold.
Press her lips the while they glow!

Oh, revere her raven hair!
Although it be not silver-gray —

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

Too early Death, led on by Care,
May snatch save one dear lock away.
Oh, revere her raven hair!

Pray for her at eve and morn,
That Heaven may long the stroke defer;—
For thou mayst live the hour forlorn
When thou wilt ask to die with her.
Pray for her at eve and morn!

Thomas Hood

WISHING

RING-TING! I wish I were a Primrose,
A bright yellow Primrose blowing in the
spring!

The stooping boughs above me,
The wandering bee to love me,
The fern and moss to creep across,
And the Elm-tree for our king!

Nay—stay! I wish I were an Elm-tree,
A great lofty Elm-tree, with green leaves
gay!

The winds would set them dancing,
The sun and moonshine glance in,
The birds would house among the boughs,
And sweetly sing!

To Mother

Oh — no! I wish I were a Robin.
A Robin or a little Wren, everywhere to go;
Through forest, field or garden,
And ask no leave or pardon,
Till winter comes with icy thumbs
To ruffle up our wing!

Well — tell! Where should I fly to,
Where go to sleep in the dark wood or dell?
Before a day was over,
Home comes the rover,
For mother's kiss, — sweeter this
Than any other thing!

William Allingham

THE VISIT

“Do you go to Norton, mamma, this next
week?

I wish you had leisure to listen to me,
For when you are writing I don't like to
speak,
And that letter will never be finished, I
see.”

“I will lay down my pen, then, my dear little
child,
For I see you have minded the lesson we
read;

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

Come, jump on my knee here," mamma said
and smiled,
As she kissed the soft hair on her Emily's
head.

"Yes, to Norton we are going, and what
shall I say
To your two little playmates there, Har-
riet and Ann?
Shall I say you can read now as well as can
play,
And can pull out your needle as fast as
they can?"

"No, mamma, that was not what I wished
you to hear!
And I fear you won't like what I'm going
to say;
Stop, put down your head, let me speak in
your ear,
For to whisper, I think, is by much the
best way."

She asked to be taken her young friends to
see,
And to show them her work-box, her dolls,
and her toys;
She said she would try such a good child to be,
And be well-bred and kind to the two
little boys.

To Mother

She said if they teased her, or for her dolls
cried,

She would not forget she was older than
they,

If as boys they were rude, she would try
not to chide,

But would put up the dolls until they
went away.

From Ann she could learn how her bracelets
to string,

And with Harriet would practice doll's
bonnets to make;

She would give to the latter her favorite
ring,

And for dear little Ann, that Dutch doll
she would take.

"Then pray, dear mamma, pray do not say
no ;

You are always so kind, do indulge me in
this:

I think if you like it, papa 'll let me go,

And I shall be so good, I'll do nothing
amiss."

Papa was consulted, and though it was
far,

Little Emily's goodness and worth gained
the day,

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

She was promised to go when the next week
came round,
And see — there is the carriage now driv-
ing away.

Rhymes for the Nursery

THE BABY

WHAT is the pretty little thing
That nurse so carefully doth bring,
And round its head her apron fling?
A baby.

Oh, dear, how very soft its cheek:
Why, nurse, I cannot make it speak,
And it can't walk, it is so weak,
Poor baby.

Here take a bite, you little dear,
I've got some cake and sweetmeats here,
'T is very nice, you need not fear,
You baby.

Oh, I'm afraid that it will die,
Why can't it eat as well as I,
And jump, and talk? do let it try,
Poor baby.

Why, you were once a baby too,
And could not jump, as now you do,
But good mamma took care of you,
Like baby.

To Mother

And then she taught your pretty feet
To pat along the carpet neat,
And called papa to come and meet
His baby.

Oh, good mamma, to take such care,
And no kind pains and trouble spare,
To feed and nurse you when you were
A baby.

Jane and Ann Taylor

GETTING UP

BABY, baby, ope your eye,
For the sun is in the sky,
And he 's peeping once again
Through the frosty window pane;
Little baby, do not keep
Any longer fast asleep.

There, now, sit in mother's lap,
That she may untie your cap,
For the little strings have got
Twisted into such a knot;
Ah! for shame, — you 've been at play
With the bobbin, as you lay.

There it comes, — now let me see
Where your petticoats can be ;

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

Oh, — they 're in the window seat,
Folded very smooth and neat :
When my baby older grows
She shall double up her clothes.

Now one pretty little kiss,
For dressing you as neat as this,
And before we go downstairs,
Don't forget to say your pray'rs,
For 't is God who loves to keep
Little babies in their sleep.

Jane Taylor

MAMMA!

(From "The Floweret")

MY own mamma!
My dear mamma!
How happy I shall be,
To-morrow night,
At candle-light,
When she comes home to me.

To-morrow night,
At candle-light, —
Yes, that 's the time, they say,
That she 'll be here,
Our mother dear, —
How long she 's been away.

To Mother

'T is just a week,
Since on my cheek
She pressed the parting kiss ;
It seems like two, —
I never knew
So long a week as this.

My tangled hair
She smoothed with care,
With water bathed my brow ;
And all with such
A gentle touch, —
There 's none to do so now.

I cannot play
When she 's away ;
There 's none to laugh with me ;
And much I miss
The tender kiss, —
The seat upon her knee.

When up to bed
I 'm sorrowing led,
I linger on the stairs ;
I lie and weep —
I cannot sleep —
I scarce can say my prayers.

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

But she will come,
She 'll be at home
To-morrow night, and then
I hope that she
Will never be
So long away again.

Anna M. Wells

TO MY MOTHER

THEY tell us of an Indian tree
Which howsoe'er the sun and sky
May tempt its boughs to wander free,
And shoot and blossom, wide and high,
Far better loves to bend its arms
Downward again to that dear earth
From which the life, that fills and warms
Its grateful being, first had birth.
'T is thus, though wooed by flattering friends,
And fed with fame (if fame it be),
This heart, my own dear mother, bends,
With love's true instinct, back to thee!

Thomas Moore

CUDDLE DOON

THE bairnies cuddle doon at nicht
Wi' muckle faught an' din ;
" Oh try and sleep, ye waukrife rogues,
Your faither 's comin' in."

To Mother

They never heed a word I speak ;
I try to gie a froon,
But aye I hap them up an' cry,
" Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

Wee Jamie wi' the curly heid —
He aye sleeps next the wa' —
Bangs up an' cries, " I want a piece ;"
The rascal starts them a'.
I rin and fetch them pieces, drinks,
They stop awee the soun',
Then draw the blankets up an' cry,
" Noo, weanies, cuddle doon."

But, ere five minutes gang, wee Rab
Cries out, frae 'neath the claes,
" Mither, mak' Tam gie ower at ance,
He's kittlin' wi' his taes."
The mischief's in that Tam for tricks,
He'd bother half the toon ;
But aye I hap them up and cry,
" Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

At length they hear their father's fit,
An', as he steeks the door,
They turn their faces to the wa',
While Tam pretends to snore.
" Hae a' the weans been gude ?" he asks,
As he pits aff his shoon ;
" The bairnies, John, are in their beds,
An' lang since cuddled doon."

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

An' just afore we bed oorsels,
We look at our wee lambs;
Tam has his airm roun' wee Rab's
neck,
And Rab his airm round Tam's.
I lift wee Jamie up the bed,
An' as I straik each croon,
I whisper, till my heart fills up,
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht
Wi' mirth that's dear to me;
But soon the big warl's cark an' care
Will quaten doon their glee.
Yet, come what will to ilka ane,
May He who rules aboon
Aye whisper, though their pows be
bald,
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon."

Alexander Anderson

THE BABY

SAFE sleeping on its mother's breast
The smiling babe appears,
Now sweetly sinking into rest;
Now washed in sudden tears:
Hush,-hush, my little baby dear,
There's nobody to hurt you here.

To Mother

Without a mother's tender care,
The little thing must die,
Its chubby hands too feeble are
One service to supply ;
And not a tittle does it know
What kind of world 't is come into.

The lambs sport gayly on the grass
When scarcely born a day ;
The foal, beside its mother ass,
Trots frolicksome away,
No other creature, tame or wild,
Is half so helpless as a child.

To nurse the Dolly, gayly drest,
And stroke its flaxen hair,
Or ring the coral at its waist,
With silver bells so fair,
Is all the little creature can,
That is so soon to be a man.

Full many a summer's sun must glow
And lighten up the skies,
Before its tender limbs can grow
To anything of size ;
And all the while the mother's eye
Must every little want supply.

Then surely, when each little limb
Shall grow to healthy size,

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

And youth and manhood strengthen him
For toil and enterprise,
His mother's kindness is a debt,
He never, never will forget.

Jane Taylor

GOOD-NIGHT

LITTLE baby, lay your head
On your pretty cradle-bed ;
Shut your eye-peeps now the day
And the light are gone away ;
All the clothes are tucked in tight ;
Little baby dear, good-night.

Yes, my darling, well I know
How the bitter wind doth blow ;
And the winter's snow and rain
Patter on the window-pane :
But they cannot come in here,
To my little baby dear ;

For the window shutteth fast,
Till the stormy night is past ;
And the curtains warm are spread
Round about her cradle bed :
So till morning shineth bright
Little baby dear, good-night.

Jane Taylor

To Mother

THE OLD ARM-CHAIR

I LOVE it! I love it! and who shall dare
To chide me for loving that old arm-chair?
I've treasured it long as a sainted prize,
I've bedew'd it with tears, and embalm'd it
with sighs;
'T is bound by a thousand bands to my heart;
Not a tie will break, not a link will start.
Would ye learn the spell?—a mother sat
there,
And a sacred thing is that old arm-chair.

In childhood's hour I linger'd near
The hallow'd seat with listening ear;
And gentle words that mother would give,
To fit me to die and teach me to live:
She told me shame would never betide
With truth for my creed and God for my
guide;
She taught me to lisp my earliest prayer,
As I knelt beside that old arm-chair.

I sat and watch'd her many a day,
When her eye grew dim, and her locks were
gray;
And I almost worshipp'd her when she
smiled,
And turn'd from her Bible to bless her child.

Old-Fashioned Mother Poems

Years roll'd on, but the last one sped —
My idol was shatter'd, my earth-star fled;
I learnt how much the heart can bear,
When I saw her die in that old arm-chair.

'T is past! 't is past! but I gaze on it now
With quivering breath and throbbing brow:
'T was there she nursed me, 't was there she
died;

And memory flows with lava tide.
Say it is folly, and deem me weak,
While the scalding drops start down my
cheek;

But I love, I love it! and cannot tear
My soul from a mother's old arm-chair.

Eliza Cook

SONNETS *on* MOTHERHOOD



AD MATREM

OFT in the after days, when thou and I
Have fallen from the cope of human view,
When, both together, under the sweet sky
We sleep beneath the daisies and the dew,
Men will recall thy gracious presence bland,
Conning the pictured sweetness of thy face;
Will pore o'er paintings by thy plastic hand,
And vaunt thy skill, and tell thy deeds of
 grace.

Oh may they then, who crown thee with true
 bays,

Saying, "What love unto her son she bore!"
Make this addition to thy perfect praise,
"Nor ever yet was mother worshiped
 more!"

So shall I live with thee, and thy dear fame
Shall link my love unto thine honored name.

Julian Henry Fane

NATURE

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
 Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
 Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
 And leave his broken playthings on the
 floor,

To Mother

Still gazing at them through the open door,
Nor wholly reassured and comforted
By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid, may not
please him more ;

So Nature deals with us, and takes away
Our playthings one by one, and by the
hand

Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends the what
we know.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

BEDTIME

'Tis bedtime ; say your hymn, and bid
“ Good-night ;

God bless Mamma, Papa, and dear ones
all.”

Your half-shut eyes beneath your eyelids
fall,

Another minute, you will shut them quite.

Yes, I will carry you, put out the light,

And tuck you up, although you are so
tall !

What will you give me, sleepy one, and call
My wages, if I settle you all right ?

I laid her golden curls upon my arm,

Sonnets on Motherhood

I drew her little feet within my hand,
Her rosy palms were joined in trustful bliss,
Her heart next mine beat gently, soft and
warm

She nestled to me, by Love's command,
Paid me my precious wages — "Baby's
Kiss."

Francis, Earl of Rosslyn

HER FIRSTBORN

It was her first sweet child, her heart's de-
light:

And, though we all foresaw his early doom,
We kept the fearful secret out of sight;
We saw the canker, but she kiss'd the bloom.
And yet it might not be: we could not
brook

To vex her happy heart with vague alarms,
To blanch with fear her fond intrepid look,
Or send a thrill through those encircling
arms.

She smil'd upon him, waking or at rest:
She could not dream her little child would
die:

She toss'd him fondly with an upward eye:
She seem'd as buoyant as a summer spray,
That dances with a blossom on its breast,
Nor knows how soon it will be borne away.

Charles Tennyson Turner

To Mother

TO A YOUNG CHILD

As doth his heart who travels far from home
Leap up whenever he by chance doth see
One from his mother-country lately come,
Friend from my home — thus do I welcome
thee.

Thou art so late arrived that I the tale
Of thy high lineage on thy brow can trace,
And almost feel the breath of that soft gale
That wafted thee unto this desert place,
And half can hear those ravishing sounds
that flowed

From out Heaven's gate when it was oped
for thee,

That thou awhile mightst leave thy bright
abode

Amid these lone and desolate tracks to be
A homesick, weary wanderer, and then
Return unto thy native land again.

Eliza Scudder

THE VIRGIN

MOTHER! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
Woman! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost;

Sonnets on Motherhood

Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak
strewn

With fancied roses, than the unblemished
moon

Before her wane begins on heaven's blue
coast;

Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might
bend,

As to a visible Power, in which did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in Thee
Of mother's love with maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with terrene!

William Wordsworth

THANKSGIVING AFTER CHILDBIRTH

WOMAN! the Power who left his throne on
high,

And deigned to wear the robe of flesh we
wear,

The Power that thro' the straits of Infancy
Did pass dependent on maternal care,
His own humanity with Thee will share,
Pleased with the thanks that in his People's
eye

Thou offerest up for safe Delivery
From Childbirth's perilous throes. And
should the Heir

To Mother

Of thy fond hopes hereafter walk inclined
To courses fit to make a mother rue
That ever he was born, a glance of mind
Cast upon this observance may renew
A better will; and, in the imagined view
Of thee thus kneeling, safety he may find.

William Wordsworth

MY MOTHER

THERE was a gather'd stillness in the room :
Only the breathing of the great sea rose
From far off, aiding that profound repose,
With regular pulse and pause within the
gloom

Of twilight, as if some impending doom
Was now approaching;— I sat moveless there,
Watching with tears and thoughts that were
like prayer,

Till the hour struck,— the thread dropp'd
from the loom ;

And the Bark pass'd in which freed souls
are borne.

The dear still'd face lay there ; that sound
forlorn

Continued ; I rose not, but long sat by :
And now my heart oft hears that sad seashore,
When she is in the far-off land, and I
Wait the dark sail returning yet once more.

William Bell Scott

Sonnets of Motherhood

EVENING

AGE cannot wither her whom not gray hairs
Nor furrowed cheeks have made the thrall
of Time;

For Spring lies hidden under Winter's rime,
And violets know the victory is theirs.

Even so the corn of Egypt, unawares,
Proud Nilus shelters with engulfing slime;
So Etna's hardening crust a more sublime
Volley of pent-up fires at last prepares.

O face yet fair, if paler, and serene
With sense of duty done without complaint!
O venerable crown! — a living green,
Strength to the weak, and courage to the
faint —

Thy bleaching locks, thy wrinkles, have but
been

Fresh beads upon the rosary of a saint!

Wendell Phillips Garrison

TO MY FIRST LOVE, MY MOTHER

SONNETS are full of love, and this my tome
Has many sonnets: so here now shall be
One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me
To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,
To my first Love, my Mother, on whose
knee

To Mother

I learnt love-lore that is not troublesome;
Whose service is my special dignity,
And she my lodestar while I go and come.

And so because you love me, and because
I love you, Mother, I have woven a
wreath
Of rhymes wherewith to crown your
honored name:
In you not fourscore years can dim the
flame
Of love, whose blessed glow transcends the
laws
Of time and change and mortal life and
death.

Christina G. Rossetti

TRIBUTES
to
MOTHERS



MOTHER O' MINE¹

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
 Rudyard Kipling

AT BETHLEHEM

LONG, long before the Babe could speak,
When he would kiss his mother's cheek
 And to her bosom press,
The brightest angels standing near
Would turn away to hide a tear —
 For they are motherless.

¹ By permission of the author, Rudyard Kipling.
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To Mother

Where were ye, Birds, that bless His name,
When wingless to the world He came,
And wordless, though Himself the Word
That made the blossom and the bird?

John Banister Tabb

TO HIS MOTHER

He brought a Lily white,
That bowed its fragrant head
And blushed a rosy red
Before her fairer light.

He brought a rose ; and, lo,
The crimson blossom saw
Her beauty, and in awe
Became as white as snow.

John Banister Tabb

THE SHEPHERDESS

SHE walks — the lady of my delight —
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them
white ;
She guards them from the steep.
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.

Tributes to Mothers

She roams maternal hills and bright,
Dark valleys safe and deep.
Into that tender breast at night
The chastest stars may peep.
She walks — the lady of my delight —
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.
She is so circumspect and right ;
She has her soul to keep.
She walks — the lady of my delight —
A shepherdess of sheep.
Alice Meynell

MOTHERLESS

I WRITE. My mother was a Florentine,
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing
me .

When scarcely I was four years old ; my life,
A poor spark snatched up from a failing lamp
Which went out therefore. She was weak
and frail ;

She could not bear the joy of giving life—
The mother's rapture slew her. If her kiss
Had left a longer weight upon my lips,
It might have steadied the uneasy breath,
And reconciled and fraternized my soul
With a new order. As it was, indeed,

To Mother

I felt a mother-want about the world,
And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
Left out at night, in shutting up the fold, —
As restless as a nest-deserted bird
Grown chill through something being away,
 though what

It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born
To make my father sadder, and myself
Not overjoyous, truly. Women know
The way to rear up children (to be just)
They know a simple, merry, tender knack
Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
And stringing pretty words that make no
 sense,

And kissing full sense into empty words;
Which things are corals to cut life upon,
Although such trifles: children learn by such
Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
And get not over-early solemnized, —
But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's Divine,
Which burns and hurts not, — not a single
 bloom, —

Become aware and unafraid of Love.
Such good do mothers. Fathers love as well.
— Mine did, I know, — but still with heavier
 brains,

And wills more consciously responsible,
And not as wisely, since less foolishly;
So mothers have God's license to be missed.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Tributes to Mothers

CHILD AND MOTHER

O MOTHER-MY-LOVE, if you 'll give me your
hand,

And go where I ask you to wander,

I will lead you away to a beautiful land —

The Dreamland that's waiting out yonder.

We 'll walk in a sweet-posie garden out there

Where moonlight and starlight are streaming

And the flowers and birds are filling the
air

With fragrance and music of dreaming.

There 'll be no little tired-out boy to undress,

No questions or cares to perplex you ;

There 'll be no little bruises or bumps to
caress,

Nor patching of stockings to vex you.

For I 'll rock you away on a silver-dew
stream,

And sing you asleep when you 're weary,

And no one shall know of our beautiful
dream

But you and your own little dearie.

And when I am tired I 'll nestle my head

In the bosom that 's soothed me so often,

To Mother

And the wide-awake stars shall sing in my
stead

A song which our dreaming shall soften.
So Mother-my-Love, let me take your dear
hand,

And away through the starlight we'll
wander —

Away through the mist to the beautiful
land —

The Dreamland that's waiting out yon-
der!

Eugene Field

MY AIN WIFE

I WADNA gi'e my ain wife
For ony wife I see ;
I wadna gi'e my ain wife
For ony wife I see ;
A bonnier yet I 've never seen,
A better canna be —
I wadna gi'e my ain wife
For ony wife I see !

O couthie is my ingle-cheek,
An' cheerie is my Jean ;
I never see her angry look,
Nor hear her word on ane.
She 's gude wi' a' the neebours roun'
An' aye gude wi' me —

Tributes to Mothers

I wadna gi'e my ain wife
For ony wife I see.

An' O her looks sae kindlie,
They melt my heart outright,
When o'er the baby at her breast
She hangs wi' fond delight;
She looks intill its bonnie face,
An' syne looks to me —
I wadna gi'e my ain wife
For ony wife I see.

Alexander Laing

SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

SHE was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!

To Mother

Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty ;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine ;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death ;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

William Wordsworth

CLING TO THY MOTHER

CLING to thy mother ; for she was the first
To know thy being, and to feel thy life ;
The hope of thee through many a pang she
nurst ;
And when, midst anguish like the parting
strife,

Tributes to Mothers

Her babe was in her arms, the agony
Was all forgot, for bliss of loving thee.

Be gentle to thy mother ; long she bore
Thine infant fretfulness and silly youth ;
Nor rudely scorn the faithful voice that o'er
Thy cradle pray'd, and taught thy lis-
ings truth.

Yes, she is old ; yet on thine adult brow
She looks, and claims thee as her child e'en
now.

Uphold thy mother ; close to her warm heart
She carried, fed thee, lull'd thee to thy
rest ;

Then taught thy tottering limbs their un-
tried art,

Exulting in the fledging from her nest ;
And now her steps are feeble, by her stay,
Whose strength was thine in thy most feeble
day.

Cherish thy mother ; brief perchance the
time

May be that she will claim the care she
gave ;

Past are her hopes of youth, her harvest
prime

Of joy on earth ; her friends are in the
grave ;

To Mother

But for her children, she could lay her head
Gladly to rest among her precious dead.

Be tender with thy mother ; words unkind,
Or light neglect from thee, will give a
pang

To that fond bosom, where thou art en-
shrined

In love unutterable, more than fang
Of venom'd serpent. Wound not that strong
trust

As thou wouldst hope for peace when she is
dust.

O mother mine ! God grant I ne'er forget,
Whatever be my grief, or what my joy,
The unmeasured, inextinguishable debt
I owe thy love ; but make my sweet em-
ploy

Ever through thy remaining days to be
To thee as faithful, as thou wert to me.

George Bethune

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

“ Now I lay me down to sleep :
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,”
Was my childhood's early prayer
Taught by my mother's love and care.

Tributes to Mothers

Many years since then have fled ;
Mother slumbers with the dead ;
Yet methinks I see her now,
With love-lit eyes and holy brow,
As, kneeling by her side to pray,
She gently taught me how to say,
“ Now I lay me down to sleep :
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

Oh ! could the faith of childhood's days
Oh ! could its little hymns of praise,
Oh ! could its simple, joyous trust
Be recreated from the dust
That lies around a wasted life,
The fruit of many a bitter strife !
Oh ! then at night in prayer I 'd bend,
And call my God, my Father, Friend,
And pray with childlike faith once more
The prayer my mother taught of yore, —
“ Now I lay me down to sleep :
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

Eugene Henry Pullen

BIRTH

JUST when each bud was big with bloom,
And as prophetic of perfume,
When spring, with her bright horoscope,
Was sweet as an unuttered hope ;

To Mother

Just when the last star flickered out,
And twilight, like a soul in doubt,
Hovered between the dark and dawn,
And day lay waiting to be born ;

Just when the gray and dewy air
Grew sacred as an unvoiced prayer,
And somewhere through the dusk she heard
The stirring of a nested bird, —

Four angels glorified the place :
Wan Pain unveiled her awful face ;
Joy, soaring, sang ; Love, brooding, smiled ;
Peace laid upon her breast a child.
Annie R. Stillman (" Grace Raymond ")

ONLY ONE

HUNDREDS of stars in the pretty sky ;
Hundreds of shells on the shore together ;
Hundreds of birds that go singing by ;
Hundreds of bees in the sunny weather.

Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn ;
Hundreds of lambs in the purple clover ;
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn ;
But only one mother the wide world over.

George Cooper

Tributes to Mothers

“THE OLD FACE OF THE MOTHER OF MANY CHILDREN”

THE old face of the mother of many children,
Whist ! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day
morning,
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the
fences,
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild-
cherry and cat-brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the
soiree,
I heard what the singers were singing so
long,
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from
the white froth and the Water-blue.

Behold a woman !
She looks out from her Quaker cap, her face
is clearer and more beautiful than the
sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded
porch of the farmhouse,
The sun just shines on her old white head.

To Mother

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-
daughters spun it with the distaff and
the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot
go and does not wish to go,
The justified mother of men.

Walt Whitman

A MOTHER

AH! bless'd are they for whom, 'mid all
their pains,
That faithful and unalter'd love remains;
Who, Life wreck'd round them — hunted
from their rest —
And, by all else forsaken or distress'd —
Claim, in *one* heart, their sanctuary and
shrine —
As I, my Mother, claim'd my place in
thine!
Oft, since that hour, in sadness I retrace
My childhood's vision of thy calm sweet
face;
Oft see thy form, its mournful beauty
shrouded
In thy black weeds, and coif of widow's
woe;

Tributes to Mothers

Thy dark expressive eyes all dim and clouded
By that deep wretchedness the lonely
know :

Stifling thy grief, to hear some weary task,
Conn'd by unwilling lips, with listless air ;
Hoarding thy means, lest future need might
ask

More than the widow's pittance then could
spare.

Hidden, forgotten by the great and gay,
Enduring sorrow, not by fits and starts,
But the long self-denial, day by day,
Alone amidst thy brood of careless hearts !
Striving to guide, to teach, or to restrain,
The young rebellious spirits crowding
round,

Who saw not, knew not, felt not for thy
pain,

And could not comfort — yet had power
to wound !

Ah ! how my selfish heart, which since hath
grown

Familiar with deep trials of its own,
With riper judgment looking to the past,
Regrets the careless days that flew so fast,
Stamps with remorse each wasted hour of
time,

And darkens every folly into crime !

Caroline E. S. Norton

To Mother

TO MY MOTHER

I SEE your face as on that calmer day
When from my infant eyes it passed away
 Beyond these petty cares and questionings
 Beyond this sphere of sordid human
 things —
The trampled field of time's capricious play.

Bright with more mother-love than tongue
 can say,
Stern with the sense of foes in strong array,
 Yet hopeful, with no hopefulness earth
 brings —
I see your face.

O gracious guarder from the primrose way,
O loving guide when wayward feet would
 stray,
O inspiration sweet when the heart sings,
O patient ministrant to sufferings,
Down the long road, *madonna mia*, may
I see your face.

Robert Haven Schauffler

Tributes to Mothers

MY MOTHER

SHE was as good as goodness is,
Her acts and all her words were kind,
And high above all memories
I hold the beauty of her mind.

Frederic Hentz Adams

THE END

INDEXES

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

A month, sweet little ones, is past	16
A Stranger, to His own	84
A Widow, — she had only one!	7
Age cannot wither her whom not gray hairs	161
Ah! bless'd are they for whom, 'mid all	178
As a fond mother, when the day is o'er	155
As doth his heart who travels far from home	158
As Joseph was a-waukin'	82
Auld Daddy Darkness creeps frae his hole	102
Baby, baby, ope your eye	142
Before I knew the love of man	52
Brightly for him the future smiled	63
Brook, of the listening grass	19
Children are what the mothers are	125
Cling to thy mother; for she was the first	172
Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east	33
Departed Child! I could forget thee once	24
“Do you go to Norton, mamma, this next week?”	138
Ere last year's morn had left the sky	124
Ere the moon begins to rise	95
Every week of every season out of English ports go forth	58
He brought a Lily white	166
He came all so still	87
He sang so wildly, did the Boy	5
Heigh Ho! daisies and buttercups	3
“Ho, Sailor of the sea!”	40
Home they brought her warrior dead	18
“How many miles to Baby-Land?”	112
Hundreds of stars in the pretty sky	176
Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber	92
I have two sons, wife	51
I love it! I love it! and who shall dare	150
I see your face as on that calmer day	180
I thought it was the little bed	135
I wadna gi'e my ain wife	170
I write. My mother was a Florentine	167

Index of First Lines

If I were hanged on the highest hill	165
Is the noise of grief in the palace over the river . . .	79
It was her first sweet child, her heart's delight . . .	157
It was the winter wild	69
Just when each bud was big with bloom	175
Little baby, lay your head	149
Long, long before the Babe could speak	165
Lord, I am weeping. As Thou wilt, O Lord	62
Love thy mother, little one!	136
Mary!	54
Mother of Christ long slain, forth glided she	65
Mother wept, and father sigh'd	39
Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost	158
My heart is like a fountain true	113
My little dear, so fast asleep	126
My mother bore me in the southern wild	123
My mother's hands are cool and fair	28
My own mamma!	143
"Now I lay me down to sleep"	174
O, Hush thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight . . .	106
O Mother-My-Love, if you'll give me your hand . .	169
O that those lips had language! Life has passed . .	44
O when the half-light weaves	42
Oft in the after days, when thou and I	155
Oh, to come home once more, when the dusk is fall- ing	118
Ring-Ting! I wish I were a Primrose	137
Safe sleeping on its mother's breast	147
Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see .	83
Sea-Birds are asleep	91
She seemed an angel to our infant eyes!	4
She walks — the lady of my delight	166
She was a phantom of delight	171
She was as good as goodness is	181
Sleep, Baby, sleep!	95
Sleep, little baby of mine	115
Sleep, little pigeon, and fold your wings	96
Sleep, sleep, beauty bright	105
So fair, so dear, so warm upon my bosom	111
So; it is nightfall then	22
Sonnets are full of love, and this my tome	161
Still farther would I fly, my child	43
Sweet and low, sweet and low	92

Index of First Lines

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht	145
The dark-fringed eyelids slowly close	119
The days are cold, the nights are long	97
The old face of the mother of many children	177
The wind blew wide the casement, and within	121
There sitteth a dove, so fair and white	98
They sin who tell us love can die	127
They tell us of an Indian tree	145
There was a gather'd stillness in the room	160
There's a song in the air!	85
This book is all that's left me now, —	50
This, then, is she	7
Thou that once, on mother's knee	86
'T is bedtime; say your hymn, and bid "Good- night"	156
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee	104
What is the little one thinking about?	116
What is the pretty little thing	141
What is the road to slumber-land and when does the baby go?	98
Whene'er there comes a little child	128
White little hands!	103
Who fed me from her gentle breast	133
Within the crib that stands beside my bed	122
Woman! the Power who left his throne on high	159
Would you know the baby's skies?	16
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night	100
Ye Spartan mothers, gentle ones	61

INDEX OF TITLES

Aboriginal Mother's	
Lament, An.....	Charles Harpur..... 43
Absent Soldier Son,	
The.....	Sidney Dobell 62
Ad Matrem.....	Julian Henry Fane..... 155
Alison's Mother to the	
Brook.....	Josephine Preston Peabody 19
At Bethlehem.....	John Banister Tabb 165
Auld Daddy Darkness	James Ferguson..... 102
Baby, The.....	Jane Taylor..... 147
Baby, The.....	Jane and Ann Taylor..... 141
Baby-Land.....	George Cooper..... 112
Baby's Skies.....	M. C. Bartlett..... 16
Bedtime.....	Francis, Earl of Rosslyn... 156
Birth.....	Annie R. Stillman..... 175
	("Grace Raymond")
Carol, A.....	Unknown..... 87
Child and Mother....	Eugene Field..... 169
Children.....	Walter Savage Landor.... 125
Children's Kisses....	Josephine Preston Peabody 22
Christ the Mendicant	John Banister Tabb..... 84
Christmas Carol, A...	Josiah Gilbert Holland.... 85
Christmas Carol.....	Unknown..... 82
Cling to thy Mother..	George Bethune..... 172
Cottager's Lullaby,	
The.....	Dorothy Wordsworth..... 97
Cradle Hymn, A.....	Isaac Watts..... 92
Cradle Song.....	Thomas Bailey Aldrich.... 95
Cradle Song.....	William Blake..... 105
Cradle Song (From	
"Bitter-Sweet")...	Josiah Gilbert Holland.... 116
Cradle Song.....	Unknown..... 115
Cuddle Doon.....	Alexander Anderson..... 145
Daguerreotype, The...	William Vaughn Moody... 7

Index of Titles

English Mother, An...	Robert Underwood Johnson	58
Evening.....	Wendell Phillips Garrison..	161
Firstborn, The.....	John Arthur Goodchild....	111
Getting Up.....	Jane Taylor.....	142
Good-Night.....	Jane Taylor.....	149
Half-Waking.....	William Allingham.....	135
Her Firstborn.....	Charles Tennyson Turner..	157
How's My Boy?.....	Sidney Dobell.....	40
Hymn on the Nativity	John Milton.....	69
Immortality of Love, The.....	Robert Southey.....	127
Japanese Lullaby.....	Eugene Field.....	96
Lines to My Mother's Picture.....	William Cowper.....	44
Little Black Boy, The..	William Blake.....	123
Little Child's Hymn, A.....	Francis Turner Palgrave...	86
Lullaby of an Infant Chief.....	Walter Scott.....	106
Mamma!.....	Anna M. Wells.....	143
Maternal Grief.....	William Wordsworth.....	24
Maternity.....	Annie P. L. Fields.....	122
Matres Dolorosæ.....	Robert Bridges.....	61
Mother, A.....	Caroline E. S. Norton....	178
Mother and Child....	William Gilmore Simms...	121
Mother and Poet.....	Elizabeth Barrett Browning	33
Mother and Son.....	Phœbe Cary.....	63
Mother in Egypt, A...	Marjorie L. C. Pickthall ..	79
Mother o' Mine.....	Rudyard Kipling.....	165
Mother to Son.....	Irene Rutherford McLeod.	52
Mother Wept.....	Joseph Skipsey.....	39
Motherhood.....	Agnes Lee.....	65
Motherless.....	Elizabeth Barrett Browning	167
Mother-Song (From "Prince Lucifer")...	Alfred Austin.....	103
Mother's Love.....	Thomas Burbidge.....	5

Index of Titles

Mother's Picture, A...	Edmund Clarence Stedman	4
Mother's Return, The.	Dorothy Wordsworth	16
Mother's Song	Unknown	113
My Ain Wife	Alexander Laing	170
My Bird	Emily C. Judson	124
My Little Dear	Dollie Radford	126
My Mother	Frederic Hentz Adams	181
My Mother	Jane Taylor	133
My Mother	William Bell Scott	160
My Mother's Bible	George Pope Morris	50
Nature	Henry W. Longfellow	155
"Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep"	Eugene Henry Pullen	174
Old Arm Chair, The	Eliza Cook	150
One Mother	Irene Rutherford McLeod	54
Only One	George Cooper	176
Regina Cœli	Coventry Patmore	83
Road to Slumber-Land, The	Mary Dow Brine	98
Sad Mother, The	Katharine Tynan Hinkson	42
Sea Slumber-Song	Roden Noel	91
Sephestia's Lullaby (From "Menaphon" Robert Greene)		104
Seven Times Four	Jean Ingelow	3
She was a Phantom of Delight	William Wordsworth	171
Shepherdess, The	Alice Meynell	166
Sleep, Baby, Sleep	Anonymous	95
Song from "The Prin- cess"	Alfred Tennyson	18
Song of Twilight, A	Unknown	118
Songs for My Mother	Anna Hempstead Branch	28
Swedish Mother's Lul- laby	Frederika Bremer	98
Sweet and Low	Alfred Tennyson	92
Thanksgiving after Childbirth	William Wordsworth	159

Index of Titles

"That They All May Be One".....	Roden Noel.....	128
"The old face of the mother of many children" Walt Whitman.....		177
To a Child Embracing His Mother.....	Thomas Hood.....	136
To a Young Child....	Eliza Scudder.....	158
To His Mother.....	John Banister Tabb.....	166
To My First Love, My Mother.....	Christina G. Rossetti.....	161
To My Mother.....	Thomas Moore.....	145
To My Mother.....	Robert Haven Schauffler..	180
Tucking the Baby In..	Curtis May.....	119
Two Sons.....	Robert Buchanan.....	51
Virgin, The.....	William Wordsworth.....	158
Visit, The.....	Rhymes for the Nursery...	138
Widow's Mite, The...	Frederick Locker-Lampson.	7
Wishing.....	William Allingham.....	137
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.....	Eugene Field.....	100

INDEX OF AUTHORS

Adams, Frederic Hentz	181
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey	95
Allingham, William	135, 137
Anderson, Alexander	145
Anonymous	95
Austin, Alfred	103
Bartlett, M. C.	16
Bethune, George	172
Blake, William	105, 123
Branch, Anna Hempstead	28
Bremer, Frederika	98
Bridges, Robert	61
Brine, Mary Dow	98
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett	33, 167
Buchanan, Robert	51
Burbidge, Thomas	5
Cary, Phoebe	63
Cook, Eliza	150
Cooper, George	112, 176
Cowper, William	44
Dobell, Sidney	40, 62
Fane, Julian Henry	155
Ferguson, James	102
Field, Anne P. L.	122
Field, Eugene	96, 100, 169
Garrison, Wendell Phillips	161
Goodchild, John Arthur	111
Greene, Robert	104
Harpur, Charles	43
Hinkson, Katharine Tynan	42

Index of Authors

Holland, Josiah Gilbert.....	85, 116
Hood, Thomas.....	136
Ingelow, Jean.....	3
Johnson, Robert Underwood.....	58
Judson, Emily C.....	124
Kipling, Rudyard.....	165
Laing, Alexander.....	170
Landor, Walter Savage.....	125
Lee, Agnes.....	65
Locker-Lampson, Frederick.....	7
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth.....	155
May, Curtis.....	119
McLeod, Irene Rutherford.....	52, 54
Meynell, Alice.....	166
Milton, John.....	69
Moody, William Vaughn.....	7
Moore, Thomas.....	145
Morris, George Pope.....	50
Noel, Roden.....	91, 128
Norton, Caroline E. S.....	178
Palgrave, Francis Turner.....	86
Patmore, Coventry.....	83
Peabody, Josephine Preston.....	19, 22
Pickthall, Marjorie L. C.....	79
Pullen, Eugene Henry.....	174
Radford, Dollie.....	126
Rhymes for the Nursery.....	138
Rossetti, Christina G.....	161
Rosslyn, Francis, Earl of.....	156
Schauffler, Robert Haven.....	180
Scott, Walter.....	106
Scott, William Bell.....	160
Scudder, Eliza.....	158
Simms, William Gilmore.....	121

Index of Authors

Skipsey, Joseph.....	39
Southey, Robert.....	127
Stedman, Edmund Clarence.....	4
Stillman, Annie R.....	175
("Grace Raymond")	
Tabb, John Banister.....	84, 165, 166
Taylor, Jane.....	133, 142, 147, 149
Taylor, Jane and Ann.....	141
Tennyson, Alfred.....	18, 92
Turner, Charles Tennyson.....	157
Unknown.....	82, 87, 113, 115, 118
Watts, Isaac.....	92
Wells, Anna M.....	143
Whitman, Walt.....	177
Wordsworth, Dorothy.....	16, 97
Wordsworth, William.....	24, 158, 159, 171

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